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Better

by [FaustianFantasy](#)

Summary

Secrets have a special way of causing trouble, especially old ones. And Overwatch was no stranger to secrets.

Angela's just surprised it wasn't one of her secrets that started the trouble. Yet.

Notes

I'm bored on vacation, so I'm writing this, 14 chapters in total. Rotating PoV of Angela, Fareeha, and Ana, with Angela's being flashbacks.

This one's Angela-centric, with her (platonic) relationship with Ana being just as, if not more, important than her relationship with Fareeha.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Prologue - Lungs

Dr. Angela Ziegler had a problem.

Well, she actually had quite a few problems in her life, if she was being honest. Torbjorn kept bothering her about weaponizing her nanotech, Ana was being overbearing again, Jack was being a hardass and she had to deal with traumatized recruits who expect her to be consoling, McCree was... McCree, and omnicns were trying to take over the world, the list goes on. But there was only one major problem that both needed her personal attention and could be solved in a timely manner.

Her lungs were failing, and not in a way that her biotech could fix.

It had taken a while for her to notice, the only early sign being a sudden increase in the automatic use of her nanotech when she used the Valkyrie suit. The first couple of times it happened she figured she had just caught a bug that her tech eliminated before symptoms started showing. But then it happened again, and again, and again.

A systematic increase in the use of vital resources wasn't something she could just ignore, so after the latest battle she looked into her suit's nanite usage history. Which was understandably not something she did very often, she typically knew exactly when and where she was being healed. Even after being in Overwatch for nine years, being shot was still somewhat notable for her.

The history showed a sudden surge of nanites to her lungs every time she put the suit on, and a slow but steady stream to them the entire time had the suit on. Which... wasn't encouraging.

The only thing that would do that was a slow but constant degradation to her lung tissue, it was as if perfectly healthy cells were just dying and decomposing. And considering that she was using more and more of her tech to repair the damage everytime she wore the suit, the degradation was getting faster.

And surprisingly enough, she couldn't even blame this problem on Overwatch; this one was entirely her own fault. Apparently using prototype versions of her own tech on herself after only a year of successful lab trials was unwise. And not sufficiently following up on the potential consequences when all of the lab rats she used that version of her tech on died of various degenerative illnesses was even more so.

She of course fixed that in the next version, and that experience put a damper on her self-experimentation after that.

She had always thought it weird that it had cured her asthma without any negative repercussions, at least now she knew.

Of course, just because she couldn't fix her lungs with her tech didn't mean she couldn't fix her problem. Lung transplants were entirely feasible. And artificially grown lungs made out of her own cells to lessen the chance of rejection had been in commercial use for years now.

But the recovery time before her lungs would be strong enough for her rather strenuous second job of being the world's most effective battle medic would be uncomfortably long. And while she could just do research in the meantime, her research necessitated long periods of waiting while the newest configuration of her tech was created in large enough quantities to be used in tests. Long periods of waiting that she typically filled with travel to war-torn locales to heal the resident Overwatch branches to alleviate her boredom.

Boredom had always been her greatest weakness.

Along with calculated recklessness. Like what she was planning now with the alternative to a lung transplant.

Her other option; an actually artificial set of lungs, not just artificial but mechanical. An idea that had been in development for decades before the omnic crisis made having mechanical components unappealing and the rise of grown organs made them obsolete.

Obsolete before Angela took the blueprints and tweaked them before implanting a set in a man named Genji after his body was injured too severely for a conventionally grown set of lungs to attach properly. Along with replacing all of his limbs, most of his digestive system, his throat, and almost all of his skin. But the lungs were the pertinent part of that story.

Inserted properly, the lungs would not require recovery time that her biotech couldn't limit. Merely a short adjustment period. And after that they would be more efficient, both in use and in space, than conventional ones. Genji was proof of that, he had much more endurance now that he had effectively lost his ability to lose his breath. She could even install small storage devices in the free space, so that she could operate in oxygen deficient environments for longer periods of time.

That solution presented an additional problem though. Namely a much more extensive surgery that would actually require altering more of herself than just replacing her lungs, the ones that she had implanted in Genji had also required an artificial ribcage and a mechanically enhanced spine. Not to mention the casing around the lungs to protect his more fleshy parts from his mechanical ones, like his heart.

So what was more important to her, her ability to perform her job effectively, or an irrational attachment to her own flesh and bones that would just be replaced by something better?

Angela thought that the answer was rather obvious. And frankly would never understand how people could think otherwise, even if she would respect their opinions. A mechanical set of lungs would just be better than the set nature provided. It would allow her to perform better, it would let her save more lives by limiting the time she needed to recover from strenuous exercise. Strenuous exercise like she would be doing on the battlefield, in moments where her prompt and precise actions saved lives.

Something that made her better, that made her more able to save lives? How could she justify not doing it?

From Angela's point of view, there was really no other option. But that presented a problem of it's own.

She knew that if she told her coworkers at Overwatch that they would say that downtime wouldn't be a problem. That they could pick up the slack while she recovered. That doing this to herself would be unnecessary. They would try to stop her out of some silly desire for her to not be artificial. To not be like an omnic, as if that were even possible. They would try and stop her, for no good reason.

They had tried to stop her research when it headed in that direction before, she had no doubts that they would try to stop her from doing this.

Maybe she could talk them into it, Gabriel could be convinced if she played on his practicality but Ana and Jack would be hard sells. And Angela really did not want to waste time on convincing them when she could just do it herself without their input.

But there was a solution to that too. Just don't let them object in the first place. She could do the surgery on her own dime, she had enough money saved up to manufacture the parts and she could do the surgery herself with the right anaesthetic. And as for finding the time...

"Hey Jack, do you have a minute to talk?" Angela made sure to knock before she asked, Jack hated being surprised in his own office. Which of course meant Ana and Gabriel did it constantly. Which she supposed was the leeway being old comrades got them. She however saw no point in antagonizing the already stressed man.

Which was probably why he liked her.

"Is it important?" Jack asked, not even looking up from the paperwork on his desk.

As much as he liked anybody he worked with.

"It's about me taking some time off." Angela said, knowing that he probably wouldn't like that. Along with being head of the medical branch of Overwatch, she was head of Research and Development, purely because Torbjorn couldn't be bothered with bureaucracy. All of the experimental technology that Overwatch was developing landed on her desk at one point or the other, and most of it was classified enough that if she wasn't around to handle it, it could only go to Jack. They both knew that if she took time off, she was significantly increasing his workload.

He actually looked up at her this time, looking far too tired. He had been working far too much since he had taken command. Not that she had any room to talk. "So that would be a yes."

"I would like to take Monday through Wednesday off on the week of the 21st of August." Angela said apologetically. Enough time to make the implants and on a set of days when she would plausibly want to take time off.

Jack made a show of looking at the calendar on his wall, "Angela, it's May." When she only smiled and nodded he sighed, "So, I'm going to assume this isn't medical leave then."

"No, not medical leave."

"Alright, why?"

Here goes...

"August 23 will be the twentieth anniversary of my parent's death. And I thought... that I would like to visit them for that." Angela said, her insides squirmed as she used her parents' death to deceive her boss; it wasn't a lie, she did want to visit and this just gave her an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. An opportunity to get the surgery and visit her parents' graves. Still, she felt horrible about it. "And the two surrounding days for travel." That one was a lie. She would leave on Friday, perform surgery on Saturday and spend the rest of the time recuperating.

The harsh lines on Jack's face softened as he looked at Angela. It took all she had not to squirm under his compassionate stare as he set down his pen and gave her his full attention, "Angela, I've known you for over nine years now. In that time, you have never taken a day off that you weren't forced to. Of course you can have those days off. In fact, barring an emergency, you can take the whole week."

Angela shook her head as she said, "No, I only need those three days. Any more would be a waste."

“Well, you have them anyways. I’ll tell security not to let you in if I have to. You might as well spend them at home.”

“I couldn’t.” Angela said, more to stop herself from saying something else than because she meant it. She was sure neither she nor Jack wanted the conversation to get so sappy as her saying that this was her home now.

“You can and you will. Overwatch managed to survive for over a decade before you joined, we can manage for a week without you on call” he said with a smile, “You’ve got a week’s vacation, enjoy it.”

“Thank you,” Angela said, smiling helplessly.

“You’re welcome, now is there anything else? I unfortunately have to get back to, this,” he said as he gestured disgustedly to his paperwork. Despite his obvious dismissal, he looked more the optimistic man who recruited her than he had when she walked in.

“No, nothing else,” Angela said before she turned to leave. Standing in the doorway, she paused and turned back. “Except one thing. You’re looking a little pale Jack, have you been getting enough sun lately?”

“Get back to work Doctor,” Jack said flatly. The amused glare that he gave her made her smile even wider.

“Alright alright...” Angela said, laughing as she raised her hands placatingly. She made her way out the door, before peeking her head back into his office to say “At least move to an office with windows, it’s dismal in here.”

“Work!” She could hear the grin in his voice as she walked away.

That went well. She got what she wanted, and got Jack in a good mood. Which wasn’t easy to do these days, he had too many responsibilities for one man, especially one who is losing his best friend.

It went well... So why did she feel so guilty?

She didn’t lie really, she was planning on doing everything she said she was.

But... a lie of omission was still a lie. And lying to a man she respected left a bad taste in her mouth.

But it didn’t matter, she was doing this for a reason. They would try to stop her. But she was doing this for them, their lives were in her hands far too often for her to perform sub-optimally. She would give anything to help her friends, her family.

Giving up her lungs? In exchange for something *better*? No question.

It would make her better, which would let her save more lives. How could she not do it?

It would make her better.

She would be *better*.

Reunion

Chapter Notes

Arc I - Rifle
Part I - Reunion

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was amazing to watch how all of her comrades reacted to her mother coming back from the dead.

Putting aside Fareeha's own complicated relationship with the woman and her mixed feelings about her return, the change in the people she had been calling teammates for the last year was stunning.

Whatever Fareeha was expecting when she, Reinhardt, Torbjorn, and Jack ran into her mother during a mission, it was not for Reinhardt to break down crying on Ana's shoulder. She also wasn't expecting Torbjorn to squeal in delight. She definitely didn't expect Jack to start laughing.

Jack. Laughing.

And he was *still* laughing under his breath as the shuttle they were in approached Gibraltar. It was bizarre.

Fareeha had gone through her after-battle cool down protocols as she watched Ana interact with her teammates, flexing her arms and legs in her Raptora suit, some of the most expensive prosthetic limbs in some of the most expensive armor in the world. She listened to the gentle whir of her fingers as she watched Reinhardt dab at his eyes with a tissue while laughing at something Ana said, her ears detecting the slightly different whir from her prosthesis and the sound from her suit. She listened to her mother's story silently as she tested each digit in turn, watching the movement and listening to the machinery inside her.

Fully functional. Taking off the suit was a half hour process, she couldn't do it here. She had nothing else to distract herself for the rest of the flight, however short it may be now. Nothing to keep her from her thoughts.

The sight of her mother bringing out sides of these men that she hadn't seen in over a year working together brought all of the complicated emotions she felt toward her mother to bear. Happiness of course, but there was more there than she wanted to think about now. But...

Fareeha's introspection and the others' conversation was interrupted by the landing of their shuttle. They had arrived at Gibraltar.

Time for more of Overwatch to learn of Ana's survival.

Of course they might already know, and considering that they typically did not have a welcoming party consisting of most of Overwatch, that was likely.

"Captain Amari!" Fareeha's back straightened as her head whipped in the direction she heard Lena's jubilant crow. But she wasn't there anymore, instead she was standing in front of Ana.

Lena was talking to Ana. Of course. Lena was *hugging* Ana. And chatting a mile a minute into her face. Fareeha forced herself relax, no one was reporting to her here.

One by one the other members approached Ana, each just as overjoyed as the last as they all crowded around Ana and Fareeha stood by silently.

Fareeha watched from the shuttle as Ana walked down and greeted her colleagues, *her* colleagues, not entirely sure what to do. She did not particularly want to participate in the growing furor, but just leaving felt... wrong. And as was becoming the norm for situations where she had nothing else to do, her eyes drifted toward Angela. Watching Angela had become a habit that Fareeha wasn't in a hurry to break, and indulging might be a welcome distraction.

Angela stood slightly to the side of all of the commotion, unlike the others she hadn't moved since the shuttle landed. And she was just watching them all with a gentle smile on her face, much like Fareeha was, although Fareeha was sure she looked less gentle in her combat suit than Angela did in her blouse and slacks, and she felt decidedly less comfortable.

That might have been the most surprising reaction to Fareeha, amidst all of the shock and joy there was Dr. Ziegler, completely serene with an expression that Fareeha saw on her face almost every day.

But that wasn't entirely true. From her vantage point on the shuttle, she saw when the expression on Angela's face shifted when Ana turned her back to Angela to greet a sobbing McCree, her gentle smile turning into a dark frown. It was the first time Fareeha had ever seen her seriously frown outside of combat or surgery, and it was the most grim expression Fareeha had ever seen on the woman. Following her gaze, she saw that Angela wasn't actually looking at Ana, she was looking at the rifle slung across her back.

But as quickly as it had appeared, the frown replaced by that gentle smile again, although Fareeha thought it looked less genuine, as she stepped up towards Ana. Fareeha wasn't close enough to make out what everyone else had been saying in all of their noise, but Fareeha had always had an ear for Angela's voice.

"Welcome back Ana."

With that she gently clapped Ana's shoulder and took a step back, letting Ana go back to the conversation she was having with Lena and McCree. Or rather, let Lena and McCree talk at her.

And... That was it.

Her piece said, Angela stepped back from the commotion leaving Ana to the others and leaving Fareeha baffled. That was it? 'Welcome back Ana'? Fareeha herself had received a much warmer and more personal welcome when she had joined Overwatch, and she had barely known Angela before that. Ana had been her coworker for over a decade, and Ana had always spoken so highly of Angela to Fareeha. She would have expected some kind of reaction from Angela, but no. Stunned, Fareeha watched as Angela distanced herself even more, standing at a point that was even farther away from Ana than Fareeha was. And then she stopped, and watched. Watched with the most grim expression Fareeha had ever seen on her.

Fareeha could only stare at her in bafflement, this definitely wasn't what she was expecting.

Her gaze flit between Angela and Ana in concern. Ana was oblivious to Angela's reaction, she was still talking to McCree. But Angela was staring at Ana's back, at the rifle. Something wasn't right.

Well, she couldn't stand on the shuttle all day, and the growing glare on Angela's face was starting to worry her. No it was definitely worrying her. Maybe Angela would appreciate the company and a chance to distract herself.

It was a testament to how bothered Angela was that she didn't notice Fareeha's approach. She was normally as hard to sneak up on as a cat. And Fareeha would know, she had tried. But here she was, standing slightly beside Angela looking worriedly at the frown on her face. She didn't like it there, Angela was one of the most calm and pleasant individuals she had ever met, a frown just didn't fit her. Besides, she was much too pretty for such an ugly expression. Smiling at the thought Fareeha cleared her throat and watched as Angela jumped slightly before facing her. Angela's frown vanished as quickly as it appeared, replaced by a smile that did not reach her eyes as she greeted her reflexively, "Fareeha."

"You looked like you could use some company." Fareeha said under her breath, watching as the tension in Angela's shoulders started to relax.

Angela just responds with an amused, knowing look, getting a grin from Fareeha. She had used that line to initiate conversation more than once, but she always meant it.

"You looked a little upset by your conversation with Ana," Fareeha continued when Angela didn't verbally respond.

The look Angela gave her this time was much less playful and more considering, and Fareeha let her gaze drift down to Angela's lips as she pursed them in thought. Then she said, "It wasn't the conversation."

"Are you alright?" Fareeha asked, her eyes snapping back up to Angela's blue ones.

"I will be, it's nothing to concern yourself over." Angela said as she gently nudged the side of Fareeha's armor with her elbow affectionately, and Fareeha believed her. That was something Fareeha had learned very soon after they had met, Angela didn't say things she didn't believe. "And good company goes a long way." And Angela smiled at her, a gentle smile that was more in her eyes than her mouth and Fareeha couldn't help but suspect that this one was much more genuine than the one Angela had shown to her mother.

Fareeha had to fight the urge to blush, both at Angela's words and her expression. Angela was frustratingly attractive, but she wasn't going to distract Fareeha from trying to comfort her.

"Well, I do hope you don't mind if I worry about you regardless," Fareeha said charmingly, or at least she hoped it was charming. The soft chuckle she got out of Angela showed her that she had succeeded. Fareeha loved watching Angela laugh, she did it like no one else Fareeha knew; she had an expressive face and laughter brought out the best in it, and her chest didn't move with her laughter. Not that Fareeha made a habit of looking at Angela's chest, but it was just bizarre; her chest never moved with her breath. But Fareeha had always liked bizarre things.

"I expect that I would have to mind it almost constantly if it bothered me every time you worried about me unnecessarily." Angela teased dryly, her tone not matching the smile tugging at her lips.

Fareeha just gave what she hoped was a winning smile in response before they lapsed into companionable silence. The mood around Angela was much lighter than it was before, so Fareeha considered the conversation a success. And she supposed she was in a better mood as well. Funny, she hadn't even noticed that she was in a bad mood before. After all, what did she have to be upset about? She got to see her mother for the first time in over a decade. This was a happy occasion. So why was she happier having a five sentence conversation with Angela than she was after being with her mother for the first time in almost ten years?

Well, Fareeha thought as she looked fondly at her companion, *besides the obvious reason*.

Fareeha was content to just stand in silence together for as long as it took for it to become socially acceptable to leave the excitement around Ana's return behind, but Angela apparently felt otherwise.

"I can't imagine how you are feeling right now, this must've been quite the shock." Angela's voice was sympathetic as she broke the silence around them along with Fareeha's growing good mood.

Fareeha shrugged, not particularly wanting to talk about it, not even with Angela. Eventually she said, "She sent a letter a little while ago. That was quite the surprise."

"A letter," Angela said incredulously, looking at Fareeha as if she were waiting for her to say it was a joke. When Fareeha merely stared ahead, apparently Winston was telling a story to a laughing Ana now, Angela just looked shocked. Then, an unimpressed look briefly flitted across her face before she forced an unconvincing smile. "That... That sounds like Ana."

Fareeha turned and studied Angela for a moment, taking in her dispassionate expression before saying, "I suppose it does. I hope you don't mind me saying this, but you don't seem quite as enthused as the others."

"I'm not really the excitable sort." Angela said mildly, "Besides, Jack and the others worked with Ana long before I did. I'll let the old guard have their turn with her first. I'm sure I'll get to talk to Ana when I take her to my office for a check up."

"Old guard huh?" Fareeha asked skeptically, nodding her head towards where McCree was standing next to Ana.

"He is four months older than me." Angela said lightly.

Fareeha didn't even say anything as she gestured to Tracer, who was right next to McCree, and who was over a decade younger than the doctor.

"Ana was Tracer's first commander when she joined Overwatch, they connected pretty deeply for having known each other for such a short time." Angela justified, thinly in Fareeha's opinion.

"You know, you don't have to talk around the subject if you really don't want to talk about why you aren't over there." Fareeha said, seeing how uncomfortable Angela was getting.

There was a pause before Angela said, "I notice you aren't over there either."

"It's complicated."

"So it is."

There was a pause in conversation as they watched Ana and Reinhardt laugh uproariously at something that left the others around them bemused. Apparently inside jokes never grew old.

"I was never friends with your mother, I respected her and worked well with her. But we weren't friends." Angela said finally. While Angela's voice wasn't hard it definitely wasn't anywhere as warm as it usually was.

"I actually consider myself much closer to you than I ever was with her," she continued, finishing her statement with the smile that Fareeha had realized months ago not many got to see.

Fareeha smiled back, feeling her face grow warm before responding, "That's funny, I had always

thought that you were quite close.”

Angela looked at her baffled. Fareeha really must have misread how deep of a relationship they had, they must have been very distant if that was the expression Fareeha got for saying that.

“She often spoke of you to me when I was younger, and always with the utmost respect.” Fareeha explained.

"In fact I remember back when," Fareeha started nostalgically before she cut herself off, her face growing hot. She had just realized what she was going to say, in front of Angela. But in front of Angela's curious face she couldn't help but continue. Oh well, it's not like she had anymore pride after that incident where she was shot in the ass. "Back when I got my first poster of you," Fareeha barreled on, ignoring the sudden grin on Angela's face, "She actually encouraged me, and got me another. I think she got me more Mercy paraphernalia than I ever bought for everyone else combined."

Angela looked simultaneously more confused and smug than Fareeha had ever seen her, it was adorable. Smug was a surprisingly good look on Angela and Fareeha definitely did not regret telling that story, even if she was now hiding her red face behind her Raptora helmet.

"That was pretty much the first and only time she ever encouraged my interest in Overwatch I think." Fareeha added thoughtfully, She paused for a moment to collect herself before continuing with a rueful smile, “She often told me that I should try and be more like you. She always did want me to be a doctor, and she expressed it more strongly after you joined Overwatch.”

She did regret saying that as soon as it left her mouth as she inadvertently removed the smug grin on Angela's face. In it's place she just looked stricken.

“I'm sorry.” Angela said, and she meant it. And that meant the world to Fareeha, for reasons she didn't really want to think about.

“Don't be, it was hardly something you had control over, that's just why I was surprised you weren't close.” Fareeha said, trying to convey how little she wanted Angela to feel guilty, and how little she wanted to have this discussion.

Angela accepted her diversion with a nod before she turned and watched the others with a frown, a slight downturn to her lips that conveyed more weariness than actual anger. She watched them for a moment before quietly saying, “I've always felt that she respected what I am and what I do more than she respected me.”

The words struck a chord with Fareeha. Memories flooded her, memories of having her thoughts and beliefs dismissed and ignored. Memories of feeling more like an ungrateful daughter than a self-realized person of her own every time she talked to her mother, even after she had been an adult for the better part of a decade.

Fareeha didn't say anything for a moment, letting the silence settle over them again as she watched as Ana prodded Jack with her finger and scolded him, prompting a fit of laughter from everyone else. It was a joyous picture. A joyous picture that she was watching from the outside. Watching her mother interact with *her* coworkers, *her* friends, and make them happier than Fareeha had ever seen them filled her with so many emotions. Happiness of course, but it was tainted with bitterness. She had worked so hard for so many years to become her own woman, to become Captain Amari, to become Pharah, to be an agent of Overwatch, and she did it under her mother's shadow and disapproval and she had *succeeded*.

She was Pharah, she was an agent of Overwatch. And she was happy.

And now she was on the outside looking in at a world of her mother's making.

Seeing her mother and her friends happy made her happy. But she wasn't with them. She was on the outside. Again.

But at least she had company this time. Company that understood her better than she thought anyone else would, without even trying.

“Yeah, that sounds like her.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh Fareeha, you thought this was going to be a ship fic.

Old Mistakes

Chapter Notes

Arc I - Rifle

Part II - Old Mistakes

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After over a decade of working alone working in an actual organization, even one as disorganized as the new Overwatch was, was both surreal and chafing. It would take some time to get used to working in a command structure again, to working with people who she could trust to have her back. But Ana was an army woman through and through, and she was sure that she would adapt soon enough.

Didn't make the command meetings any less surreal though. They were by turns both more and less formal than she was used to. A gathering of all of the most decorated members of this new Overwatch to discuss tactics and future plans had a weight that none of her own missions in the last decade had. A sense that she was once again on the cutting edge of military might and justice. Even if they were no longer funded by the UN, and were barely more than a vigilante group operating out of an abandoned base.

The sight filled Ana with nostalgia for the old days of Overwatch. Even if this particular group of people had never been together during Overwatch's heyday, every individual represented the pride and glory of the organization. Reinhardt, Torbjorn, Dr. Ziegler, Winston, Jack, Genji, Mei, Jesse McCree.

And Fareeha.

The sight of her baby girl calmly sitting at a table that held some of the most decorated soldiers and heroes in the world, men and women who Fareeha had once regarded as living legends, and talking with them on even footing filled Ana with a familiar feeling of pride and dismay. A feeling that she had felt almost constantly since Fareeha joined the army, over fifteen years ago.

Fareeha was out there fighting her mother's wars with a pride and passion that left Ana breathless. Fareeha was a more decorated soldier than Ana herself had been at her age, the pride and glory of Egypt, even after she had moved on to HSI to become the youngest security chief in the private company's long and illustrious history. The thought of the battles her daughter had fought made Ana's heart clench, especially every time she imagined the battles that had left her daughter a quadruple amputee by the age of thirty three. And wasn't that a smack in the face? She didn't even know when her baby lost her arms.

Fareeha had done so many incredible things during the time Ana had been gone; she had even done something in one year that Ana couldn't in twelve, become friends with Dr. Angela Ziegler.

Angela was without a doubt one of the best people Ana had ever met. She was smarter, kinder, and more moral than anyone else Ana cared to compare her to. But she was not what Ana would call friendly. She could count on one hand every one of Angela's friends that she knew about. Mei, Reinhardt, Jesse, and maybe Zenyatta and Torbjorn. She treated everyone else with the same disaffected kindness that she treated her patients with. Kind to a fault, but with no personal fondness. Even after working with her for over a decade, Ana had never felt like Angela

considered her more than that, a coworker. The mild response she had received on return had made that abundantly clear.

But here was her daughter, chatting with her like they were old friends. Angela had a smile tugging at her lips as she tried to feign exasperation at whatever story Fareeha was telling with exaggerated expressions and gesticulations. They both looked happier talking with each other than either of them had looked talking to her since her return.

“Enough,” Jack said, his annoyed voice cutting through the idle chatter that had settled over the meeting room, “We've obviously finished what we came here to do tonight, are there any other matters that any of you want to bring up before we adjourn?”

The years had drained all of the humor out of the man , Ana thought. Even if he had a point.

Everyone else looked like they agreed with her, with Jack having a point, not Jack having no sense of humor. Although Ana was pretty sure they would all agree with that as well. She would have to work with him on that.

Mei and Winston were the first to walk out, both of them eager to return to the project that they were working on, something to do with Snowball. Ana didn't know the details. But they were apparently excited about it which was good. Genji was next, stopping briefly to say a couple words to Angela before he left, leaving just Jack, Torbjorn, Reinhardt, Angela, Fareeha, and herself.

Now seemed as good a time as any to broach a topic she had been avoiding for a while, Ana thought as she looked over to where Torbjorn was packing up his notebook. Filled with his schematics and not anything to do with the meeting, of course.

“Torbjorn,” Ana called, getting his attention. “My biotic rifle could use a little tune up if you don't mind Torbjorn. I've been taking good care of it, but it has been over a decade; and there's only so much I can do.”

Torbjorn grinned at her, “Of course Ana, that rifle was some of my best work, I'd love to get my hands on it again. I even have some ideas that I couldn't...” He trailed off as he realized what he was about to say, and he looked unsubtly towards the side of the table where Angela and Fareeha had gotten very quiet.

That was the easy half of this conversation done.

“And Angela-”

“No.” Ana hadn't even finished saying Angela's name before she was cut off with the most chilly response she had even heard from Angela. And that was saying something, they had gotten in some pretty charged arguments before. One in particular sprang to mind.

Everyone in the room gave Angela a glance at the response, if only because of how sudden it was. Fareeha in particular was looking at her in concern.

“No?” Ana asked, not entirely surprised by the reaction but she was willing to push more because she really did need Angela to look at the generators for her ammo, the one that actually generated the medicine in her ammo and grenades was on its last legs.

Angela's eyes narrowed as she looked at Ana, and she was reminded of the other reason she had respected the doctor so much. Angela may have been a kind soul, but she also had a spine made of steel.

“No. I will have no part in your bastardization of my technology. You will continue to use the biotech generators that you stole to supply your ammo.” Angela's voice was hard.

“What do you mean stolen?” Fareeha asked slowly in the silence that followed Angela's declaration. Her eyes flitting between Ana and Angela as her own eyes narrowed in thought.

“Correct me if I'm wrong Ana, but I'm assuming that Overwatch wasn't supplying you with ammo over the years you were assumed dead. So you must have stolen the generators from some Overwatch facility or the other.” Angela said sounding deceptively dispassionate. Evidently this conversation was going about as badly as Ana was expecting it to, but it was a conversation that needed to happen at some point, and it was one that she needed to be honest for. So she nodded in agreement.

“A fact that I find particularly interesting considering that after Overwatch was disbanded I went and personally collected every single biotech generator that I built or allowed to be built, and there wasn't a single one unaccounted for. So that means that someone built one of my biotech generators without my knowledge or consent.”

“Probably the same person that built the rifle that's existence I vetoed in the planning stage.” Angela finished flatly, looking at a squirming Torbjorn now.

“It was... ah, just a proof of concept. Just to see if your tech could even be administered at range.” Torbjorn said, caving immediately under Angela's stare, he was a wonderful engineer and fighter, not so good at lying. Especially not when he was lying to friends, it was a miracle that Angela hadn't already found out prior to Ana's reappearance. Probably because Torbjorn didn't want to think about it after Ana was gone.

“Funny how I wasn't informed of the test for a concept that I vetoed.” Angela said, “As was my right. I joined Overwatch under the stipulation that my tech would never be used as a weapon. And that every use of my technology had to be done with my full knowledge and consent.”

Ana had the sinking feeling that maybe this was going to go *worse* than she was expecting. This wasn't how she was expecting Angela to react. She was calmer than Ana was expecting, the last time they had broached the subject Angela hadn't been anywhere near this calm. Maybe some honesty would help this go smoother?

“You are right Angela, I did steal both the rifle and the generators a little over a year after my death.” Ana admitted.

“The rifle that should not have existed in the first place.” Angela said, still looking at Torbjorn. She hadn't even glanced at Ana since the conversation started, which was somehow worse than if she had been glaring at her. Ana at least had experience with that.

There was no way this discussion was going to end well. And even Torbjorn could see that at this point.

And the others...Reinhardt, Jesse, and Fareeha were silently watching, none of them knew anything about this, at least as far as she knew, and they were content to stay out of it for now. And Jack... Jack was currently staring silently at the table in front of him. He knew about this, he was the one who authorized the rifle in the first place after all. And Angela had to know that.

Angela gently fiddled with her bracelets on the table, Ana had to fight the urge to look at her right hand, the gentle motion at odds with her hard gaze as it swept over the assembled heroes as she continued. “For over twenty years I trusted that Overwatch kept it's end of the promise that you made when I joined. I trusted that you valued my ability to save lives over the potential of my tech

to take them.. And now I find that I was wrong. Now I learn that you've been making a fool of me for over a decade.”

Jack raised his head in the silence that followed, saying “We did what we had to do to do our jobs. We all made out sacrifices for the greater good. No one was more important than the safety of the world. I’m sorry that you feel that we crossed a line that was never our intention, it was just one of the necessary sacrifices we all made.”

Ana winced at that response, when did Jack lose all of his social grace? He used to be the face and voice of Overwatch, surely he knew that that was unconvincing bullshit. But then again, maybe he knew that and was doing that thing where he tried to use others to punish himself for his mistakes.

“Sacrifices generally involve willingly giving something up, you sacrificed nothing and obviously it wasn’t necessary considering that Overwatch agents weren’t equipped with biotic rifles. All evidence points to you only manufacturing one of them, and leaving it to collect dust in storage when Ana died. This wasn’t a sacrifice made for the greater good, it was a favor for a friend.”

Angela finally looked back at Ana. “A friend who should have known the price of what she was asking.” Angela finished her statement by waving her right hand at Ana, the gold bangles that she wore on her wrist bouncing out of tune with the mood of the room. And Ana couldn’t help but wince at the sight of her hand, the thin layer of shiny scar tissue that covered the entirety of Angela’s palm, three of her fingers and most of the back of her hand. And Ana knew exactly when and where Angela got that scar. She was there when Angela got it, and she was there when Angela healed it. And she knew one thing, Angela’s tech didn’t leave scars.

Unless she wanted it to.

Ana got the message, and merely nodded. This was definitely going worse than she expected. And she didn’t even have anything to say in her defense, Angela hadn’t accused her of anything except stealing the weapon and generators. She seemed more interested in Jack and Torbjorn’s involvement in this than hers.

“You took my tech without my knowledge or consent and made the one thing you swore you wouldn’t. Weapons. And then you lied to me.” Angela said, stony-faced, “Even after you had built it, you told me to my face that you would never make weapons. All the while having generators pump out my tech to make bullets and grenades.”

Ana was still getting used to this Angela, the one who calmly laid out her grievances with an icy tone. The Angela she knew was passionate, and even flamboyant in her anger. She had always been slow to anger, but when she actually got angry? She was terrifying.

This new Angela was terrifying in a different way.

And more worrying was *what* Ana had missed that had changed Angela so much.

Because the Angela she knew would not still be sitting there calmly fiddling with her bracelets while saying these things. There would at least be a glare.

“And when it was stolen, you never saw fit to tell me that a weaponized version of my technology that I built to save lives was now out in the world completely unchecked.”

Ana winced at that description, that... that did not paint Jack in a good light.

“I trusted you, and you have shown yourselves unworthy of that trust. You have shown yourselves to be liars and thieves.” Even Jack winced at that, but they both had enough experience

with Angela's temper to know that interrupting her now wouldn't help them at all.

"And I will not make the same mistake again."

"All of my research will be performed under my private company, Overwatch will have no access to the research itself. Athena has already helped me wipe all digital records of my research from herself and all of her subsidiary computers. I have also removed all of the physical records and have had all of my biotech generators removed from all Overwatch associated locations, except for here in Gibraltar. I will have full control of how much of my technology Overwatch will receive."

"I will of course continue to provide the same level of resources and expertise that I have been for the last year. You will still have access to the medpacks and kits that you always have, along with your biotic fields Jack." Jack merely sighed and nodded at that. It was plainly obvious that there was no dissuading Angela at this point.

"And you," Angela said, looking flatly at Ana, "You will continue to use the stolen biotech generators to provide ammo. And if they break, then I'm sure that we have some of your old rifles still in storage. I once told you that you could weaponize my tech over my dead body, and you made me a liar. That won't happen again."

Another reason Ana had always respected her so much, Angela was damn good at holding a grudge, but she was even better at not letting her grudges affect her work. Essentially nothing would change at all, except that they were all abruptly reminded of the fact that they were only operating as well as they were, with the resources they were, at Angela's discretion. And made Ana aware that she was no longer in Angela's good graces.

Which again, changed very little, so Ana nodded her acquiescence.

Angela eyed her, Jack, and Torbjorn as everyone else looked incredibly uncomfortable. Reinhardt in particular looked shocked and appalled, which somehow hurt more than Angela's entire talk. Fareeha looked... unreadable, which was almost worse.

"If there's nothing else?" Angela asked, looking at everyone in turn. When nobody said otherwise, she simply smiled thinly at them and stood. She gently patted a very still Fareeha on her shoulder and she leaned down to say something in her ear before she walked out, just as poised as she was when she walked in.

That could have gone better. Ana thought wryly. She honestly hadn't expected Angela to agree to look at her rifle, and she was expecting a well deserved rant. But she had not been expecting something so... final from Angela.

And, she thought watching as Reinhardt stood up solemnly from his place at the table, she also wasn't expecting to have the conversation in front of other people.

"My friends..." Reinhardt started, looking like he was pained to even say that, "I did many things I regret in my time with Overwatch, we all did dark things for the lightest of reasons. But I never betrayed the trust of a friend, and I will never stand for that." He gave them a piercing look, somehow managing to look more betrayed than Angela did.

With that said, Reinhardt stood and followed Angela out the door, leaving her behind, with Torbjorn and Jack.

Fareeha and Jesse exchanged looks as they stood up to follow him, both of them avoiding looking at the other occupants. Jesse was pulling his hat down to hide his expression as he left, but

Fareeha looked unashamedly concerned as she walked out, it would surprise Ana if she didn't go directly to Angela.

She supposed that she shouldn't be surprised by how concerned Fareeha looked, this was probably the first time she had ever encountered Angela's temper. And Angela could probably use the company, she tended to be far too honest when she got angry, and say things she didn't intend to.

Well, that *definitely* could have gone better.

Sighing, Ana sank into her seat. Old secrets coming back to bite her in her ass, hardly something new. Looking back on it, having the rifle made was a mistake. Taking it from storage even more so. Using it? That might just be too much for Angela to forgive, especially considering the last real conversation they had before Ana had almost died...

But then she thought about all of the times the rifle had saved her, and the people that she had worked with over the years. She thought about the people who were still alive because of the biotech in her rifle, and knew that she just couldn't give it up; no matter how much Angela would hate her for it.

Ana laughed mirthlessly as she mused that maybe there was a very good reason that she had never been friends with Angela.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Ana, you knew this wasn't going to go well for you, but you still did it.

That counts for something right?

Next up is Angela's first real chapter, and it's a flashback of course. And I dropped plenty of hints about it in this chapter.

Anger

Chapter Notes

Arc I - Rifle
Part III - Anger

Mercy flashback this time. And it's a long one.

I'm going to lose people on this chapter I'm thinking.

Content Warning for... blood, death, gore? and uhh bones.

Just in case you thought this was a happy fic.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Angela was not having a good day.

Any day where she had to put on her Valkyrie suit and go into battle was not a good day in her books. Days where she had to pull out her sidearm were even worse. The very few days when she had to use it, were some of the worst days of her life.

Taking a life was never easy, even if she had done so thirteen more times than she had ever imagined she would so many years ago when she had become a doctor.

And as a doctor, her work didn't just stop because she was grieving for a life that she took.

If anything, the fact that the battle went badly enough that she had been isolated enough to have to take a life meant that she needed to work harder to keep everyone else alive after the fact.

Her biotech could fix a lot of things, but it couldn't remove the piece of shrapnel lodged in a soldier's heart. And it couldn't reattach limbs, or replenish lost blood. No matter how good her medical technology got, there would always be need for a steady set of hands in the operating room.

And no matter how good medical technology got, or how good of a surgeon she was, sometimes it wasn't enough.

Sometimes it felt like nothing was enough, Angela thought to herself as she covered the third and last of the soldiers that had died in her hospital with a tarp. Fifteen people had gone to that fight, thirteen had come back and of those three of them had died under her care and two more would live the rest of their lives with prosthetic limbs.

Angela glanced at the tarps on her way out the door. She would have someone else bring them down to the morgue.

She needed to change out of her Valkyrie suit, and take a shower.

She was covered in blood. And none of it was hers.

Today was not a good day.

The glances her bloody and worn figure drew were old hat at this point, when would they stop being surprised that the surgeon got some blood on her? Maybe she should bother Jack to have someone install a place where she could clean her suit near the in base hospital. Her suit was a marvel of engineering and made to take a beating, but that didn't mean she could just walk into a shower with it, or stick it in the washing machine. She had to be in her lab to take it off, maintain it, and clean it, the most she could do was wash her hands. All of which meant that she had to walk through the halls of the Overwatch headquarters covered in blood. Because someone had decided to stick her lab in the basement on the other side of the building from the hospital. Whoever designed the damn Zurich headquarters hated her.

So every Overwatch agent who happened to be in the halls between the medical room and her lab today got to see her covered in the blood of the people she had failed.

It was a bad day.

At least she had nothing else important to do today, she thought as she walked through the room that separated her lab from the outside world and unlocked her lab, which meant that she could finally take off her suit. She ignored everything in the very monochrome room as she headed straight towards her workbench. It was a big unwieldy thing made from some special wood and had a rack for tools on the raised back, it was a present from Torbjorn that did not fit the surrounding room at all and that she only used to work on her armor she was quite fond of it. And usually the asynchronous sight of it was enough to amuse her.

Not today

Taking her suit off wasn't really complicated but it did take a while to do, and it took a special tool that Angela always left in her lab, the only hand tool in the place. It was shaped like a small silver hammer, and didn't actually do anything but trigger the right sensors on the suit so that it would disengage the clips that held the suit together. She could take it off other ways, but her suit was set to destroy all of the machinery inside of itself if she did it any other way, which was something that wouldn't make her day better. No matter how satisfying it would be to rip it off like a cheap pair of tearaway pants.

Angela had to remind herself that destroying delicate machinery was never as therapeutic as it sounded when you were the one that had to deal with the consequences as she sat down and picked up the hammer and smacked the back of her neck with it to take off the neck piece.

She cracked her neck as she set the neck piece down on her worktable, along with the halo attached to it. God she hated that thing, she couldn't wait for the day her technology got small enough that she could fit her Caduceus staff controller in a smaller headpiece.

There was something to the methodical removing of her armor. Taking off each plate of it in turn, unplugging the various electronics from each other and piling all of the pieces on her table. It was usually a relaxing way to end a stressful day, but seeing her usually pristine armor covered in blood wasn't making her feel any better. The pile of bloody armor just reminded her of the life she took, and the ones she had lost.

It just made her *angry*. Angry with herself and angry with the world.

Somehow Angela didn't think cleaning it and reassembling it on her armor stand would make her feel better either.

She wanted to take a shower.

Sighing, she decided to just put it on her stand. She could take it down and clean it later.

Thankfully it was quick to assemble on the stand.

The sight of her bloody armor on the stand made her wish she had just left it on the table, regardless of how bad leaving it out was for the armor.

Her stand was basically just a fancy charcoal black mannequin, and it cut an imposing figure with its spread arms and bloody armor. It looked less like an angel of mercy, and more an angel of death. And Angela knew that is what everyone else saw when she had been walking down the hall.

She fought the urge to sigh again as she set the stand to perform a diagnostic on her armor, and to upload and examine the history. She really did not want to be blindsided by a situation like her lungs.

Angela stared at the figure for a moment, watching as the wings twitched and flared with light as the stand tested the suit's functionality. She decided to leave before the stand tested the spinal flexibility, that was always creepy to watch, even when the armor wasn't covered in blood.

Shower.

Not for the first time, she was really glad that she had a bathroom with a shower attached to her lab.

Angela really could've done without the mirror though. She didn't need to know that she had blood on her face, and in her hair. There was also something that was much too solid to be blood in her hair but she didn't want to think about that. She sighed as she ducked her head, looking at the sink rather than the mirror. Her knuckles were white as she gripped the sink. At least her hands were clean.

If only in the most literal sense. There was more blood on her hands than she could imagine. Blood of those whose lives she had taken, and blood of those whose lives she had lost on the operating table.

Enough guilt.

Shower.

Showers were nice, but what Angela really needed was to bury herself in her work until she no longer felt miserable.

She had some spare scrubs and a lab coat, and she had several ideas to improve the programming on her biotech. It would take her at least thirty minutes to test each idea, and then thirty more to integrate each of the successful ideas with each other and the core code. It was a mind numbing task that could easily take the rest of the day, and most of the night..

Excellent.

She had just sat down at her console when someone knocked on her door and Angela really had to fight the urge to sigh. She really needed to stop doing that, it was just so unsatisfying with her new lungs. Something about the lack of expansion and contraction really took all of the visceral satisfaction out of the action.

Who would knock on her door? None of the people who would visit her socially were currently in Switzerland, and anybody else who needed her would just call.

She intimidated most people, for some reason.

Angela pointedly did not sigh as she stood up and made her way back through her lab and the attached room, she didn't bother to look at the security camera before opening the door and being greeted by someone that Angela *really* did not want to talk to. Today, or any day really. But especially not today.

"Ana." Angela said mildly.

"Did I come at a bad time Angela?" Ana asked as she eyed Angela's outfit, Angela never wore scrubs if she could help it.

Yes, Angela thought uncharitably.

"No, I wasn't working on anything that can't wait a couple of minutes." Angela said, Ana wouldn't make the trip over if she didn't think it was important, and Angela would hear her out no matter how much she wanted not to talk to the older woman.

"Well, is it something that can wait a little longer than that? I have something that I want to talk to you about, and it might take a while." Ana said, sounding apologetic.

Bad days breed worse days apparently, Ana never came to talk about anything that would make Angela's day better. Not once in the twelve years that they had known each other had Angela come out of a serious conversation feeling better than before. But Angela knew exactly what Ana wanted to talk about, and they needed to have this talk some day. Might as well make worse an already bad day than delay it to a day she was actually enjoying.

"Fine, come in," Angela said, moving to let Ana into the entrance room, and motioning towards one of the chairs laying around. They would have this conversation, but she wouldn't pretend to be happy about it. "Have a seat. I'm afraid I don't have my usual selection of refreshments down here, would you like some water?"

"No thank you," Ana said, settling into the chair. Angela wished they were in her office so that she could sit with a desk between them, give her a sense of authority. As it was, Ana was just sitting in an office chair in an otherwise empty room. "I won't beat around the bush, I want to talk to you about the biotic rifle."

"I know," Angela didn't even bother getting another chair, instead she leaned against the doorway to her lab. It was an awkward position to be having a conversation in, but she knew it would bother the other woman much more than it would bother her. It was petty, but she was in a petty mood.

Ana looked completely unbothered by it though, and Angela's curt response. She merely nodded before launching into her pitch, "I know that you vetoed it, and you have a good point, putting your tech inside a rifle must feel very close to weaponizing it. Uncomfortably so, but the rifle is just the delivery system. Your actual tech would be completely unchanged from how it is now."

Angela watched Ana talk, she wasn't saying anything that she and Torbjorn hadn't already communicated in the first series of memos. "The rifle is a good idea, I will admit that range has always been the biggest weakness of my tech in the field. Still, I'm not allowing that rifle."

"Why?" Ana pressed, looking... concerned?

"It is a good idea, and I even sympathize with you for wanting something like it. I know the weight of taking a life, but I can't imagine what it must be to have your job. I will admit that I'm not strong enough to do what you do. And the chance to use my skills to let your skills be used for healing rather than killing must be... appealing." Angela said diplomatically. She wasn't lying, but she was perhaps implying a certain tolerance that she no longer had.

"But that begs the question, why didn't you just ask me?" Angela asked, looking into Ana's eyes. This was the moment when she really learned, learned if she was paranoid or if all of the anger that had been building in her for months was justified, "Why did you have Torbjorn, the *weapons designer*, complete the schematics and present them to me completed? Why was I the last to know about this rifle?"

Ana stared at Angela as silence settled on them for a moment. Eventually, Ana said, "We knew that you would disapprove of the plans to use a rifle for your biotech. We hoped that by showing you a completed version that was completely not weaponized, you would be more amenable." She swept her gaze over Angela's stiff posture before dryly adding, "Apparently we were wrong."

"You thought that I would be more amenable to you presenting me with a gun that shot my tech than the idea of possibly working with you to make a long range version of my tech." Angela said flatly.

"When you put it like that..." Ana trailed off, grimacing.

"I'm sorry Ana," Angela lied, "It's just, I have a very hard time seeing a justification for keeping me out of the development of the biotic rifle that is not either negligent or deceptive."

"What do you mean," Ana asked, somehow managing to look curious, despite being smart enough to know exactly what Angela was implying.

"I see two options here," Angela started flatly, "Either I was kept out of the development because nobody thought that I would like to be involved, or I was kept out of it because you wanted me kept out of it."

"The first option is trivially dismissed. It was part of my agreement on joining Overwatch that I be involved in every single development involving my biotech, even if just to receive my consent. Delivery devices are in fact explicitly mentioned in my contract. The idea that I wouldn't want to be a part of this... is ludicrous. Do you agree Ana?"

Ana struggled for a moment to find a response that wasn't a pile of bullshit before saying, "Yes."

"The second option raises the question of why exactly you would try to keep me out of the development of the biotic rifle, and only present me with a very sparse blueprint of a very finished gun."

"Because to me, keeping me out of the development process implies that you think I would veto the entire idea very early on, an idea which displays a rather stunning lack of trust in me, or that you had plans for the rifle that I would object to but were non-negotiable for you."

"The thought that I would dismiss a long range version of my tech out of hand... is somewhat hurtful honestly. That you would think so little of my practicality or flexibility, of course I would consider any ideas that you would present to me." Angela said, actually feeling hurt at the thought and letting that show rather than the anger that was rapidly building inside of her. "But that is an infinitely better option than the other one. Because the only thing that I can think of that I would object to out of hand would be a weaponized version of my biotech."

Angela's anger was apparent now, and a slightly wide-eyed Ana only watched as Angela continued.

"Of course, I know that it can be dangerous to think oneself into a corner and not accept opposing options, so I gave Torbjorn and Jack the chance to explain why I was not involved in the design process, and they have both failed to give me a satisfactory answer. In fact, they gave *different* answers. Which is something that I found very interesting." Angela tried to smile as she spoke, she didn't know if she succeeded. She was *Angry*.

"So I've given you the reason I believe I wasn't invited, now... Give me a better one Ana."

Ana looked slightly uncomfortable with how quickly Angela had gotten angry. But only slightly. Angela watched as she seemed to debate with herself for a moment before simply saying-

"I can't."

Any veneer of friendliness dropped from Angela's face as she fought the urge to snarl at the woman. She didn't of course. That would be *rude*.

Instead Angela talked, talking was just so much more productive than cursing someone out. No matter how much less... satisfying it was. It was the *better* option.

"Do you and Jack have any plans that involve the weaponization of my tech, Ana? And don't lie to me Ana, you may be a good liar but I will find out eventually. And I will remember this conversation."

"Yes," Ana admitted freely, "We have thought up some potential uses for it during our meetings. But we never settled on anything concrete, we were just throwing around ideas. And we of course would never test or deploy any of them without your full knowledge and consent."

Ana looked Angela in the eyes, her expression genuine, "Believe me Angela, we may want to have weapons with your tech, but we know your opinions on the subject, and we value your expertise as a doctor and a researcher far more than we value any weapon designs. Not even speaking of our personal attachment to you. We would never deploy weaponized versions of your tech"

The vehemence in her tone when she said the word 'never' almost threw Angela off-guard. Either Ana was a much better liar than Angela had thought, or she was telling the truth. But...

Ana hadn't said anything about designing the weapons, only deploying them.

"Jack isn't a particularly subtle man Ana, and he's been hinting about weapons very heavily over the last three months. I've been very firm in my continued denials, but he just hasn't stopped. You've been coming up with more ideas recently. I've always known that you want to make weapons out of my tech, and I've always trusted that you respected my decision not to let you. That trust has become very strained under all of the pressure you've been putting on it as of late." Angela said, hoping to prompt the reason behind the sudden surge in interest in her tech.

Ana shifted in her seat, looking far too comfortable with the turn in the conversation, "I will talk to Jack about that, he shouldn't pressure you, but. After the... mishaps with the rat trials of the Einherjar project we, Jack, Gabriel, and I, have been debating whether we should keep it active, the weapons were just some of the ideas that we came up with for projects to replace it."

"The Einherjar Project is still active." Angela snapped, betraying a sudden spike in anger, "There is no need for something to replace it. And in the future I would like to be included on any

discussions that are about what I should devote my research time to. I don't think there's anyone else qualified to say what kind of research I should be involved in." Angela was slightly surprised by how much Ana relaxed when she talked about the future. How angry did she seem if Ana thought she might be leaving?

Probably about as angry as she felt.

She knew that they wanted to make weapons, but to actually hear that they had been meeting behind her back to draft designs for it? They were drafting weapon designs to replace the *Einherjar project* that Angela had poured years of blood, sweat, and tears into. The fact that they would give up the *Einherjar project* for *weapons* spoke to just how little they thought of her work, and her convictions.

Convictions.

The burning rage that had been in the back of her mind for this entire conversation settled into a cold, focused fury at that word.

Conviction.

Angela looked at Ana, she looked comfortable in that seat, if rather concerned. Maybe it was time to remind Ana of how committed she was to making sure that her biotech was never weaponized. She had said it when she was recruited, and had repeated it ever since. But Ana and Jack were people of action, not words. And maybe she had to do more to convince them that they could weaponize her tech over her dead body.

Angela looked straight at Ana, and asked a question she had never asked plainly before, but already knew the answer to.

"Do you want a weaponized version of my biotech?" Angela's frosty tone gave no hints towards what she was thinking.

Ana looked like a deer caught in the headlights, it would have been funny if Angela wasn't so angry. She apparently decided honesty was best in this case, "Of course."

Angela nodded and said, "Okay," before she stood up straight and motioned for Ana to follow her as she walked into her lab. "I have something I want to show you."

Ana looked cautious as she did so, the wrinkles in the corner of her eyes deepening as she followed Angela into the lab and straight to the main console.

It was a big thing that took up an entire wall of her lab. Twelve different monitors set up around one desk with a single keyboard. Four large machines flanked the table, two on each side, each one completely unique in the world and completely vital to her research. For example-

"That," Angela said, pointing to the machine on the ground sitting to the left of her desk, "is my personal biotech fabricator. Unlike every other one in existence, this one is capable of producing any version of my biotech. In fact, it is capable of producing pretty much anything I want it to. It works on a nanoscopic scale. If I set it to build a fucking pencil, it will do so. All of the others are highly limited and their output cannot be adjusted. It would be easier to build an entirely new machine from scratch than it would be to make a generator produce a version of my tech it wasn't built for. I designed them that way on purpose."

"But this one can make anything I want it to," Angela said as she accessed the console and quickly pulled up the code that determined how this version of her biotech behaved while it was

healing. She quickly found and deleted several of the main sections of her code, "And right now I'm having it make a weaponized version of my tech." Angela wished she had been facing the other way, just to see Ana's face. But she was working.

"It is a very easy thing to do really. Making my technology build and repair biological systems was and remains horrifically difficult, making it build and repair things wrong and doing significant damage in the process is something I had to learn how not to do. Along the way to the tech you enjoy I inadvertently learned how to make a very wide variety of biological weapons, from ones that dissolve flesh to ones that induce seizures. All the weapons you could ever want, I learned how to make just to avoid making them."

Angela Ignored Ana's presence as she stared up at the code on the walls. She went up to a shelf and picked up a small glass test tube, she didn't need much for what she was planning. She made a small humming noise, her lungs made it sound oddly steady, as she put the test tube to collect from the fabricator. A few keystrokes and the fabricator was up and running, producing a steady hum. A few more and it was set to melt the test tube closed when it was finished, hopefully leaving her with an airtight glass tube with a weapon inside.

Already a thin gold mist started to accumulate at the bottom of the tube.

Angela smiled, all teeth, as she finally turned her attention back towards Ana, "It'll take about five minutes before the generator produces enough to be useful. So we have some time to talk."

Ana glanced at the vial uneasily, she wasn't a stupid woman. She knew that there was no way in hell that Angela was going to just hand her the vial and be done with it. But she didn't know what exactly Angela was going to do. Angela had gone from being visibly furious to helpfully composed much too fast to be genuine.

"We haven't had a good talk in quite a while have we?" Ana said warily, "Was there something you wanted to talk about?"

"I do. Do you remember when I joined Overwatch?" Angela asked, "I was a kid when I joined Overwatch. No matter how smart I was, or how respected I was, or how quickly I got my doctorate, I was just a still just a kid. I was only fifteen when you first approached me and sixteen when I finally signed on. And kids are stupid."

"I don't know, revolutionizing the field of medicine by the age of twelve seems pretty smart to me," Ana said looking amused despite herself. Angela was sure she probably wouldn't be amused shortly.

"Oh, I knew my medicine. But I was as stupid as all kids in the areas that really matter. things like laws and people. And I was even stupid enough to fool myself into thinking I wasn't. I read my Overwatch employment contract page by page at least a dozen times. I nitpicked at things that seemed important at the time, but really weren't and I missed some things that were very, very important." Ana looked actually interested

"Like how the despite the fact that the agreement not to use my tech is reiterated multiple times in my contract, it is completely useless, it is either worded in a way to be useless, or hopelessly vague, like saying 'Overwatch will not develop my technology without my consent' without defining precisely what 'my technology' is. Or saying that Overwatch wouldn't have the right to use my patents, patents that I don't have because I will never submit the blueprints of my biotech to any government agency." That had infuriated her to find out, but Angela had gotten over the deception. Mostly. Sued the life out of the lawyer she had hired to look over the contract though.

To Ana's credit, she looked genuinely surprised by that, "I wouldn't know, that was never my

area. We recruited you, but your actual hiring was supervised directly by Under-Secretary Adawe.”

“I didn’t actually know that, but regardless I’ve known that it is entirely legal for you to build and operate a biotech fabricator without my knowledge. I’ve allowed that loophole to go by because by the time I noticed, I trusted that you, Jack, and the rest of the organization would never do it. And besides if it ever reaches the point where you are doing that? That conflict won’t be settled in court. That will be settled by my leaving Overwatch and doing everything in my power to take down every single one of them.” Angela didn’t think that was too likely, her tech was too distinctive. She would know, if not the instant that they started using her tech, very soon after. And the risk of her leaving and taking all of her research with her was enough of a deterrent to stop them from doing anything stupid. Or she had assumed that was the case for many years.

Now, now she was no longer sure of that.

Angela wasn’t looking at Ana now, she was looking at the vial holding her biotech. It wasn’t behaving like her usual type did, it was pooling thickly at the bottom of the tube rather than diffusing throughout. As more was generated it looked more like a thick liquid than the mist of her Caduceus staff. An interesting and intentional side effect of the tweaks she did to weaponize it.

“So,” Angela said, shaking herself out of that hypothetical, “I was a stupid kid back then. But all kids are really. And I would like to think that I wasn’t one thing most kids are. Flighty. Kids believe one thing one day, only to change their minds the next. Things that are so minor in the grand scheme of things are so important to them, but I’d like to believe that I held convictions. Convictions that have remained unchanged for almost two decades now.”

Ana had settled into one of Angela’s spare chairs, seemingly content to let Angela talk to her. Angela was sure that Ana was trying to puzzle out her intentions.

But Angela was unconcerned, Ana would never guess.

“One thing that I swore to myself, is that I would never perform an operation on another person that I wouldn’t be comfortable having done to me. I swore that to myself very early on, back when I first started medical school.” Ethics classes were always her favorite ones.

“And I’ve kept to that, I have decided not to go through with a few surgeries that I was not comfortable with. And every single one operation that I have done, I would be comfortable doing to myself.” Ana looked at her sharply at that. “Yes, including what I did to Genji. I saved his life, and given the ability I will always save lives. And if the situation arises, I would gladly give up much more than Genji if it guaranteed my life.”

Angela looked directly into Ana’s eyes, “I swore that I would never do to someone else what I wouldn’t do to myself.”

“But,” Angela said, waving a hand dismissively, “I was a stupid kid then, full of anger and desperation. Do you know the story of the first time I debuted my tech?”

Ana grimaced at the memory, she did. “You slit your arm from elbow to wrist in front of the Dean of your school. Then you healed it in front of them. And then you asked for funding.”

Angela smiled at the memory, not her best moment. But it set up so much that had happened in life. And it taught her a valuable lesson. Sometimes, you have to do something drastic to be heard. Another lesson, if you do it right, you can get rewarded for complete recklessness.

Her fabricator beeped. Her weapon was done.

Ana tensed as Angela reached out and picked it up. It was still warm from the sealing of the open end, and it was deceptively beautiful. A thick, dark gold colored liquid, Angela actually found the color to be more appealing than the color of her actual tech. A sample this size contained millions of individual machines, and the damage they could do was catastrophic if programmed correctly. She could program it to fill a room and kill every living organism larger than a dormouse, or to be a subtle poison that would enter a person's veins and stay there until Angela decided to kill them. But this one just severed all cellular connections, it was completely harmless against non-biological materials. But on anything with cells it would be like the world's worst acid, leaving only the bones and the tendons that connected them behind. And that was purposefully coded in.

It was an abomination.

“And I got that funding. I was thirteen at the time.” Angela said nostalgically, fiddling delicately with the vial in her hands, it was satisfyingly heavy. “I was so angry then, and desperate. Desperate to be heard, desperate to make a difference in a world that did not want to change. I was cynical before my years. But I had my convictions, and I expanded them when I developed my tech because I knew that it had the potential to change the world. I decided that I would never use any version of my tech on another person, that I hadn’t used on myself.”

Ana suddenly looked alarmed, then rapidly horrified.

Angela smiled at her.

“I was twelve, and so angry and desperate that I was willing to hurt myself to make myself heard.” Angela said, still feeling nostalgic.

"Angela-"

“Somehow, I’m fifteen years older. And I’m less desperate, but somehow I’m still just as angry.”

Angela tilted her head as she looked at a horrified Ana, "More angry."

“Angela!” Ana said, moving her arms towards Angela placatingly, “Don-”

Angela ignored her, her voice coloring with the fury that she had been holding back for *so long*, “And I still have my convictions, and I will *never* distribute a form of my biotech that I don’t use on myself first.”

With that, Angela stared straight into Ana’s eyes and crushed the glass in her hand and experienced the worst pain she had ever felt in her life. The golden liquid in the vial splattered on her hand and the floor below her. Where ever the liquid splashed on its way to the ground it took chunks of her flesh along with it. And it took every bit of anger she had in her not to scream in agony.

Angela had been shot before. She had been burned, electrocuted, and almost drowned. Fighting Overwatch’s battles was not an easy thing to do. She had been cut so many times that she had lost count, testing new versions of her tech on herself. But nothing prepared her for the pain of having the flesh on her hand eaten away cell by cell. Bits of her hand detached from the rest and fell off, dropping with wet plopping sound on the ground with the excess golden liquid.

Ana jumped towards her, her eyes wide in concern. She said something that Angela didn’t catch as Angela jerked away from her, moving her hand above her and away from Ana. She made to cup her hand to prevent the gold liquid from falling to the floor, even as it ate away at her hand; the gold of it turning a darker maroon as bits of her flesh dissolved into it. Even in her pain, she smiled thinly at Ana.

"Don't get close Ana, it's dangerous." Angela said distantly. Ana responded loudly, Angela couldn't hear it over the rushing of blood in her ears.

It hurt.

She wasn't trying to hurt anybody, she thought as she looked at her hand. She was just trying to make a point.

It hurt.

Her hand was falling apart. She couldn't move any of her fingers, which might be because the weapon had eaten its way through her palm to the bone. The tendons that controlled the motion of her fingers were long gone now.

It hurt.

So much.

And she spoke, haltingly, "I didn't do this, to intimidate you, I doubt I could. I'm not trying to threaten you. I don't..." Angela gasped, as she felt it. Felt the weapon she had made drip through her hand and out the other side, having eaten a hole through her hand. "I don't... I'm not suicidal. I take no enjoyment or satisfaction from my own pain. I'm just making a point." The words were getting easier, even as the pain somehow got worse.

Ana had her hand on Angela's shoulder, and she had been saying something before Angela cut her off, she wasn't sure what. But Angela was cradling her hand, and Ana couldn't see it. And that defeated the entire point of doing this didn't it? So she turned and faced her. Angela couldn't imagine what she must have looked like, hunched over and pale. And the pain did nothing to take the bite out of her anger. And then she moved her hand, drawing Ana's horrified gaze to it. Angela couldn't remember the last time Ana looked so scared. That thought did not make her feel good. Nothing about this made her feel good. It wasn't meant to.

"I did this to make a point," Angela said, as she watched Ana hesitate. She obviously had no idea what to do, and Angela felt intensely sympathetic. She didn't really know what to do either, she was just winging it. "I did this so that you would know that my words have weight. I do not lie Ana, I say what I mean so I mean it when I say, Overwatch can weaponize my technology over my dead body."

"Angela, I- we need to heal your hand," Ana said trying to stay calm and help, which was kind of her, but Angela waved her off, leaning against her desk with her good hand. Ana immediately started looking around for something to help. But Angela didn't keep any medpacks here. Why would she? This is where her Caduceus staff always was.

Angela felt herself growing faint, and the pain was starting to blur the edges of her vision.

"Look at me Ana," Angela snapped, she was starting to feel faint, but she was too angry to sit down. Too angry to do anything except what she had set out to do, no matter the darkness in the corner of her eyes.

"I test *every single iteration* of my tech on myself. I have poured my blood, and tears into the tech that you use to keep your agents alive. To heal yourself when you're wounded. The tech that you owe your *life* to a dozen times over. And if you want to use that same tech to take the lives of your enemies then mine will be the first life you take." Angela snarled, and *years* of anger and frustration resonated in her words. They had been pushing and pushing for weapons for over a decade and it was time that stopped.

Ana looked at her, stunned.

“Now look me in the eye Ana, and tell me. Was the biotic rifle weaponized.” Angela demanded.

“I- *Yes!* You’ve made your point Angela, now heal yourself!” Ana said, her eyes moving from Angela’s to the exposed bone on her hand.

“Look me in the eyes Ana,” Ana did, she looked scared, Angela almost wished she was a vindictive person, if only to stop feeling so sick about this situation, “Are you willing to shoot me with that gun Ana?”

“*No .*” Ana looked appalled, “I could never Angela. You’re my friend Angela. I could... I could never.”

“Then don’t start something you can’t finish. Because that is the end result of making a weapon like that Ana, you’ll either have to give it up or kill me with it.” Angela said, her vision was going dark.

“You’ll have to kill me with it,” Angela repeated, feeling herself slump as the fight left her. She had said what she wanted to say. And it seemed like Ana got the message, now she was just left with a grievously wounded hand and a scared sniper. Why had she thought this was a good idea? Ana caught her before she fell and guided her to her chair. Angela made sure that her hand was well out of reach of Ana, even if all of the weapon had fallen on the floor. She no longer had a bioweapon eating away at her flesh, only extensive amounts of exposed bone.

“It’ll never come to that Angela, *never.*” Ana assured, “Now, *what do I do?*” She asked.

Angela’s hand was ruined. Almost all of the flesh had been eaten away, and the only thing left was bone and tendon for most of it. The only flesh she had was on her knuckles, her thumb, and the far half of her pinky. Everything else was gone.

Angela was grateful they both had strong stomachs, this situation didn’t need more messiness.

Why had she thought that this was a good idea?

“Get my halo and staff,” Angela heard herself say distantly.

Ana rushed over to her suit stand to get them when Angela heard herself talk again she was surprised by the steadiness of her voice, “I sympathize with the weight taking a life has on your heart Ana. I had to kill someone during a battle this morning.” She saw Ana freeze for a moment as she was taking the halo off of the stand before continuing to take it off.

“He was trying to kill me and the woman I was healing, she had lost her right arm in the fight and was unconscious. So I put a bullet in his head. I don’t think he expect me to have a weapon apparently.”

“Stupid of him really.”

Oh, right. Her lungs were mechanical, they probably weren’t affected by the shock she was falling into, that was why she could talk so well.

Ana had returned at some point, and was holding out the halo and connected neckpiece for Angela. She took it with her good hand, and put it across her neck, she needed to clip the back together for the electronics to work. She couldn’t control the staff without it.

“Can you clip the back please?” Angela asked. She watched Ana’s concerned face as she did so,

a very faint edge of relief finally creeping into her expression. That was good. "Danke."

Politeness was a virtue.

A thought crossed Angela's mind, "I really do sympathize with you Ana, but... I don't think this is any better than a bullet." Angela raised her hand, and she could see the wall of her lab through the lattice work of her bones. She was guessing Ana could too by the expression on her face "A bullet seems more humane really."

"Angela..." Ana said quietly. Desperately.

Right. Healing.

"You can put the staff down, it just needs to be near me," Angela said. She used the halo to activate the staff, directing the stream of her tech towards her hand. She made it seal what little flesh was left, and then she sent a stream inside herself to gather energy and mass from her fat and muscle reserves. It would take a few minutes and she would lose a pound or two, and her hand would be very weak and thin, but she would just need a few good meals and more treatments to be as good as new. Well, more like a month of daily treatments. Still, it was pretty good for having had a hand that was held together by a couple of tendons and a whim.

Ana was sitting in a chair in front of her, still holding the staff, and still looking shell shocked as she watched Angela's hand start to heal.

The silence was deafening, and Angela couldn't stand it. And she needed something to distract herself. Might as well drive her point home, or else this would all go to waste.

Time for a story Angela thought, and it crossed her mind that she might be in shock. She ignored that thought, she knew she was in shock.

"Did you know that my parents were doctors as well," Ana looked at Angela in disbelief that she would choose now to chat before shaking her head, "They owned a small practice together in my hometown," Angela said as she looked at the ceiling, she didn't need to watch her hand to heal it. And she didn't want to see Ana's face when she told the first part of this story. She hated pity. "And when the first Omnic war started and the fighting reached our town, they did not hesitate to sign up to treat the wounded, even as they made the choice to send me to evacuate when they stayed behind. They did that knowing that it was dangerous, that their lives would be in danger."

"They sound like heroes," Ana said gently, watching Angela's hand reconstitute itself.

"They died." Angela said simply, "And neither of them had any family to speak of, and I was separated from the neighbors and friends who had survived. So they left me in a world where I was alone, a world where everybody who I knew and loved had either died or left."

"I was six." Ana looked at her this time, looking... lost. Not that Angela saw.

"My parents made the decision that the services that they could offer as doctors mattered more in that time of war than making sure that their daughter grew up with a family."

The statement lingered in the air for a moment, and even though she wasn't looking at the older woman, she knew she was searching for something to say. Something that wouldn't be a meaningless platitude. Angela dropped her head, and looked Ana dead in the eye.

"And they were right."

She might as well have struck Ana for how she flinched.

“They did the right thing,” Angela continued passionately, “no matter the personal cost to themselves and to their family. I don’t remember much about them, but I remember being loved dearly. I remember my mother crying as she ushered me to the school bus that took me away from my home town and away from the fighting. I remember both of them crying as I watched them from the leaving bus, and I can only imagine the pain they must have felt when they realized that they wouldn’t survive the war. When they realized that they had left me to grow up with no family.”

Angela looked at Ana defiantly, she needed Ana to understand this, no matter how different it was from her world view.

“They did the right thing, they did the unselfish thing. And I struggle every day of my life to live up to the example they set and the sacrifices that they made.”

“They made the decision I would make in their place.”

Angela had just enough control of her ruined hand now to raise it, to point directly at Ana's face. To force her to see the mark Angela's conviction had left on the world, on herself, “And that is the decision I will make if you push me.”

“Overwatch is my family Ana, and I love all of you.” Angela said, trying to sound as earnest and genuine as she really was. Because what she was saying in this moment *mattered*. “Even you, no matter how much we argue and fight. You are the one who recruited me Ana and in doing so you gave me a home when I had given up on the idea. You gave me the chance to be *happy*, happy in a way that I hadn’t been since my parents died. I had lived with their sacrifice for years, and I crafted a purpose from it. But you gave me the chance to fulfill that purpose, and then you gave me a home. And I don't know if I can ever express how much that really means to me Ana. All I can say is that I love you for it, and I hope you believe me when I say that.”

"I do believe that Angela, you are just as much family to me." Ana said, and despite the hypocrisy of it, Angela wasn't sure she believed her.

“And I hope that you believe me when I say that I love all of you, but I will leave if you make me.”

These words mattered. They mattered because they were true. And they mattered because she had never said them before, and somehow that made them more true now than before.

“I will sacrifice this home, and all this love you people have granted me, in order to do what I believe is right. I follow in my parents' footsteps, I will make the decision that my parents made before me, the decision to do the most good in the short time I have on this world.” Passion infused with righteousness colored her speech. She hadn't ever said that before, that she would follow in her parents' footsteps. It was plainly obvious that she had, but she hadn't *said* it before. And Angela was finding out that sometimes saying something made all the difference. "I will leave."

“I don’t want to leave Ana,” Angela was ashamed by how wet her eyes were, how close she was to sobbing, but her voice was still strong, “but I will if you *ever* go behind my back like that again.”

Angela finally looked away from Ana, trying to hide her face behind her good hand.

"I- I don't want to leave."

Her voice wasn't so strong anymore.

"I-I don't..."

She was crying.

Why had she thought this was a good idea?

Ana stared at her, and Angela couldn't read the expression on her face. It wasn't a happy one though. Angela wished it was, no matter how inappropriate it would be for the situation.

She hated seeing people sad.

Ana softly cleared her throat, taking a shaky breath before saying, "There are moments in every person's life, that they know in the moment that they will remember for the rest of their life. I've had many. Moments like when I first met with the UN for the founding of Overwatch, or when Fareeha was born. This one." Ana paused and gave Angela a look that Angela didn't understand, "The day I recruited you was one of those moments."

"That was the day I met the child who would grow up to become the woman I respect more than any other." Ana said, "Do you remember what I said that day?"

"Every word." Angela said solemnly as she tried to wipe the tears from her face. She failed.

"I told you that Overwatch was made on a bed of bones. That working for it was dirty, and bloody, and painful. But at the end of the day I went home with the weight of the sins I had committed on my back and I went to sleep knowing that I did whatever it took to do what was *right*. That I didn't sleep any better for it. But that I did it anyway." The sight of Ana speaking those words overlapped with Angela's memory of the moment. The words were the same when everything else wasn't.

"Then how could I make you leave Overwatch for displaying the qualities that I used to recruit you? I told you that joining Overwatch was the *right* choice. And you believed me. Now... now I've somehow convinced you that leaving Overwatch is the right choice."

Ana looked down, and it looked like the weight on her shoulders suddenly got heavier.

"I am *sorry* Angela, that I ever made you feel like that was a decision you had to consider."

Angela didn't say anything, and she tried not to be touched. That wasn't an apology for the rifle, nor was it an explanation. There wasn't a doubt in Angela's mind that the apology was genuine and heartfelt, but it wasn't an assurance that she would do *better*. And Ana knew that.

The only sound in the room was the gentle hum of Angela's staff as she healed her hand. She was almost done, she would need a few more treatments after she gained some more weight, she had taken more of her fat reserves than she felt comfortable with. The sound of everything that Ana wasn't saying filled Angela with a tired sense of spite, and she made a last minute adjustment.

The Caduceus rod disengaged, and left her hand thin but fully functional. And with extensive scar tissue all over her hand. The imperfect job bothered Angela, but she was sure it bothered Ana more.

Angela smiled humorlessly at Ana as she waved her hand, "The wonders of modern medicine."

Ana winced at the scars on Angela's hand, but didn't say anything. She just sat there. Silently.

And Angela didn't know why she expected more from her, they hadn't spoken except to argue for years. A fight that they had started years ago, and never really ended. No matter how much they might mean to each other, most days she wasn't sure they liked each other. Obviously expecting the apology she wanted was too much.

Just because Ana was content to just sit there and do nothing, didn't mean that she had to. Standing up, she picked up her staff from where Ana had placed it at some point and walked back to her workbench.

And her armor was still bloody.

With a sigh she took off the halo. Thankfully it was the easiest part of the suit to take off, likely because it was also the most important piece.

Clipping it onto the stand, Angela turned around, leaned against her worktable and just looked at Ana. Silently sitting in a chair in the middle of her lab, facing away from Angela.

What had made her think that dissolving her own hand in front of Ana and demanding information from her was a good idea? Besides the fact that it was probably illegal and some sort of blackmail, and kind of an insane thing to do, it was just... *mean*.

For all their differences Ana did care about her, and seeing Angela do that had to have been painful for her, she didn't deserve that.

Except... Ana had gone behind her back and had a weapon designed that used her technology as ammo. They had needed to have that conversation, Angela had needed to set her limits clearly and emphatically. And they probably needed to have more conversations in the future. Preferably less dramatic ones.

But Angela could have forced the issue in a less... extreme manner. Ana looked... so small and unlike herself in that chair. She wasn't a large woman at the best of times, shorter than Angela even, but she had that force of presence and personality that made her seem bigger. Something that was absent now.

Guilt gnawed at Angela at the sight.

What had made her think this was a good idea?

Oh right, *anger*.

Angela had known for years that she had an anger problem. But she had ignored it because most of the time it *wasn't* a problem. In fact most people would say that she had the temper of a saint, because she just bottled up all her anger and used it to fuel her actions. And that worked until something big came along and it all became too much and her anger exploded out in an display of righteous fury. And when that happened she did stupid things.

Stupid things like slitting her wrists in front of the Dean, stupid things like dissolve her hand in front of Ana.

Her anger was a lot of the reason she got as far as she did, but it was also the reason why the Dean of her college had nightmares of small blonde children covered in blood for years. That poor woman.

She tended to hurt people in ways she couldn't fix when she was angry, it was one of the things that Angela hated about herself.

Thankfully it didn't happen often, but that wasn't enough.

She could do better than that.

She could *be better*.

Angela watched Ana for a bit, trying to work up the nerve to apologize. Even if Ana wouldn't apologize for the rifle, Angela still hated seeing her like this. She was about to speak up when Ana's weary voice cut her off.

"Gérard's death hit us all very hard." Ana said heavily.

Whatever Angela had been expecting her to say, that wasn't it.

"He was a good man, an honest man. And maybe we lost something with his passing," Ana paused, and her voice was darker when she continued, "Or maybe it wasn't so much that he died as *how* he died."

Angela waited in silence as Ana composed herself, the older woman dabbed at her eyes with her kerchief before continuing.

"We lost trust I think. We all loved Gérard, and when he and Amélié found each other, we loved her as well. They were such a beautiful couple. Both so kind and *good*. Their wedding remains one of the happiest occasions of my life, two people finding the perfect partner in each other. It was a beautiful day. Everyone in Overwatch loved them. And when Amélié was taken we all mourned with Gérard, and we all celebrated when she came back. And after... Gérard, we searched for her as if she were our own, because she was. But we couldn't find her anywhere. And we all know *why*." Ana's voice, thick with nostalgia and sadness turned furious as she spat out that last word.

'Why'

That was the question that Angela really didn't want answered.

And Angela didn't say anything, couldn't. She remembered the couple, and how happy they were, and she remembered those dark days just as well as Ana did. Maybe even better. After all, she was the one who cleared Amélié to return home, something that haunted her even now.

"It is funny, when Amélié was taken we all feared for our loved ones. Now that she has gone we fear our loved ones. Because we know that nobody is truly safe." Ana still hadn't looked up.

"These meetings I talk about, Gérard would have been there for them before. He was at the meeting where we decided to accept the Einherjar project, he was your biggest supporter in fact. And I know he would disapprove of what we've done with the rifle, that we betrayed your trust like we did. He was a fundamentally honest man in a way that Jack and I simply are not."

"But he is dead now, and we are not." Ana said dispassionately.

"Things have changed since he has passed, Overwatch has changed. It is no secret that we have tightened security protocols for all senior agents and their family, But Jack and I have seem to have gone farther, we are more suspicious, less willing to trust, even the most trustworthy among us." Ana said.

She sounded so tired.

"I fear that we are going too far with our fear. That we are too willing to consider ideas that we

wouldn't before. That we are willing to go farther in the name of safety, easier." Ana's voice picked up energy, anger and determination entering her words and her posture, "We are scared, and the last time we were this scared, we were at war. And when you are at war, almost everything is excusable so long as you *win*."

Ana looked at Angela now, for the first time since she started talking. Her eyes were just as full of fire as her words.

"When Overwatch was created, it was a group made up of the most skilled killers in the world. We called ourselves soldiers, but most soldiers don't have kill counts in the triple digits. We were chosen because we killed, and we killed better than anyone else in the world. After the war, we rebranded ourselves and tried to be a peacekeeping organization, starting with hiring some of the eminent scientists and doctors from across the world."

"We wanted to be more than an organization of killers." Ana spat the word killers like a curse.

"But we are scared and we are falling back to our roots when we should be moving forward to the ideal we had in mind since the start. I fear that we were lying to ourselves all those years, that we were just wolves waiting to bare our teeth at the sheep we have called family for decades."

"That is what I am scared of now that I have realized how far I have gone in my fear. How much trust I have betrayed." Ana looked... determined despite her words.

"But now I *know*. And that which is known can be *fought*." Ana said, "And I am *very* good at fighting."

"We should not be fighting and lying amongst ourselves. Fear would have me paranoid and alone and I will not make that mistake again, not here and now."

"Angela," Ana said looking into her eyes, "I am sorry that I ordered the creation of that rifle, it was a mistake and never should have happened. And I will do my best to make sure it never happens again."

"My pride and my fear are not worth more than your convictions." She said, and Angela could feel that she meant every word. "And I am sorry that I ever could have thought they were."

That... That was more than Angela could have ever hoped for.

And that... That was the Ana that Angela had joined Overwatch for.

"Thank you Ana, that is all I ask of you. And I am sorry about all of... this," Angela said gesturing to with her scarred hand at the remains of the weapon on the floor. She made a note to have the drones clean that up when she left the lab.

"Do not apologize for saying something that you meant, and that you had every right to say." Ana said firmly. Even though she was still sitting down, her posture still radiated her authority and passion. And Angela was relieved.

That was the woman Angela knew. Someone who bounced back from adversity with enviable speed. Angela was still feeling drained and weepy but Ana was full of conviction and energy. She was over twenty years younger than her, shouldn't it be the other way around?

"I was rather aggressive about it though." Angela said with a wince. What had made her think that was a good idea?

"Yes, yes you were," Ana said primly, "But judging by the bloody armor, I appear to have caught

you on a bad day.” She finished her statement in a dry tone.

“Ah, well. The battle earlier today didn’t go well, but I should not have taken that out on you Ana. I-”

“You don’t need to explain to me the stress taking lives has on you Angela. After all Dr. Ziegler, I kill people for a living.” There was a mischievous glint in Ana’s eye as she said those final words, and Angela couldn’t stop a tired smile from tugging at her lips.

Those words were how Ana started her pitch when she tried to recruit Angela.

And of all of the organizations that tried to offer her a job, Angela chose the one that sent an honest killer as their pitchman.

“Ana, I chose Overwatch because you were honest with me from the start Ana, if I’m going to stay, that has to keep being the case.” Angela said, “I’m not saying I need to be know everything that happens in Overwatch, but anything that has to do with my research or my time has to go through me.”

“Agreed,” Ana said, “Jack and I were planning on meeting to discuss current affairs after I got back from Poland, and I think it would be a good idea if you attended.”

Angela smiled, she was glad that things seemed to gone so well, despite her rather dramatic actions, “That sounds good.”

“We really should invite you to all of the command meetings anyway. After all, how else are we going to train you to take over after Jack retires?” Ana said, a teasing smirk on her lips.

“I’m sorry?” Angela said more than asked, laughing in disbelief.

“Oh it won’t happen in the next few years, but Jack is getting on in years now. And who else but you could take over for him after he retires? The only other members of Overwatch who are as respected as you are, are either too old, too young, or too idealistic to run Overwatch. You are next in line after Jack, me, and Gabriel. And when Jack ages out, so will we. Jack and I have talked extensively about this, and even Gabriel agrees.”

“Wait wait wait. What?” One moment they were arguing, the next she was dissolving her own hand, the next she was threatening to quit, then they were having a heart-to-heart about dead parents and friends and now they were talking about Angela taking over Overwatch? What?

“You are set to become the strike commander of Overwatch in the next decade or two,” Ana tsked at Angela’s still-stunned reaction, “Name one other person who could lead Overwatch after Jack leaves besides you.” Ana challenged.

Angela wracked her brain, everyone she could think of was either older than Jack like Reinhardt, completely unfit for leadership like Jesse, or “Genji.”

“He has enough trouble accepting himself,” Ana said, “Do you think the UN and the world will?”

“Winston.” He was a wonderful person who was both intelligent and driven.

“The UN will never accept someone not human. Besides, he is much too nice for the position.” Ana dismissed.

“What, and I’m not nice?” Angela asked, somewhat offended.

“You are a very kind woman Angela. A very kind woman who just mutilated her own hand in front of her superior officer to prove a point.” Ana said patiently, “There are large bits of you dissolving in goo not two feet from me. You have enough steel in your spine for the position.”

“...Alright.”

“Try not to worry about it too much Angela, nothing is set in stone and if it does happen, it is still quite a few years away. But I think you would do wonderfully. You have always been the change I wanted to see in Overwatch, even if I have to be reminded of that fact every now and again. We can talk about it more during the meeting with Jack.”

This was a weird day.

Angela just stared at the woman from across the room. She was smiling now, and using her feet to gently swivel her chair back and forth. She was glad at least one of them felt better.

...Or maybe both of them did, it was rather cathartic to talk about things that she hadn't ever spoken of.

She had an argument with Ana, and she felt better about herself afterwards.

This was a really weird day.

It was never just a normal conversation with Ana was it? It was always something dramatic or important. Never something nice and neutral like the weather. But...

She didn't really have that many conversations with Ana did she?

How long had it been since she had talked with Ana outside of work? God, it must have been... two years ago. And even then it had been about healing daughter and fitting her for prosthetic legs. Hardly cheerful conversation material. She had spoken much more with Fareeha than she had with Ana. She had apparently inherited her mother's ability to bounce back from anything, if her flirting with Angela while she was healing her was a sign. Although that might have been the painkillers.

They had been at odds for years now, and Angela couldn't remember *why*. Sure they opposed on a lot of subjects, but they agreed on more. And Angela was somehow friends with Torbjorn, who was almost literally her opposite in every way.

Ana was the main opponent for her Einherjar project, but Jack wasn't exactly jumping at it either. She only really had Gabriel still left in her corner for that one.

There... there was really no reason for them to keep just keep *fighting*. Not after all that had been said. And they had been friends once, maybe not best friends but Angela had been closer to her than to Gabriel for a long while. Now he was one of her closest friends, and she wasn't.

“Ana,” Angela said slowly as she walked towards the older woman, “As much as I'd like to sit here in my lab and chat with you, I'm starved. I haven't eaten since last night and had to use some of my fat to make my hand. I'm getting a bite to eat.”

Ana winced at her casual mention of using her fat, but she nodded and stood, “I'll get out of your hair then.”

“So... would you like to get lunch with me? I have some ideas for distribution systems for my tech, that you might like. The rifle can be done right Ana, I just have to be involved.”

Ana gave her a look, she knew exactly what Angela was trying to do. And she smiled at her. “That sounds lovely, although I’m guessing that a rifle isn’t at the top of your list Angela.”

Angela nodded in agreement before falling in step beside her saying, “No it is not, I’ve actually been playing around with the idea of devices that can heal multiple people at once. The field and drum simulations that I’ve run are the most promising. Although to be clear, these won’t be replacing the Einherjar Project. If I do agree to develop them.”

“Didn’t think they would, it’ll just be you working yourself too hard again.” Ana said.

“I would never,” Angela lied as she locked the door to her lab. She left the weapon and the bloody armor behind.

A work lunch wasn’t exactly a great sign of friendship, but it was a start.

They walked in companionable silence as they approached the cafeteria. And Angela couldn’t help but feel like this whole day was a dream. It was all so very surreal, too many emotions too quickly. She was emotionally and physically drained.

It was a weird day.

But at some point it had taken a turn for the better.

“When do you have to leave for Poland?”

“Tonight, there has been a lot of Talon activity in the area. And they apparently have some hotshot sniper on their side now, which is why I decided to go over.” Ana smirked at the thought, and Angela felt a rush of pity for the poor soul who was going to end up on the other side of Ana’s scope.

There was a reason Ana was called the best sniper in the world.

And that was because she was.

Chapter End Notes

Have fun in Poland Janina.

I’m not actually happy with this chapter. But it’s already a day late so whatever. And Mercy, you need to work on your anger issues.

And you will.

Next up, Pharah chapter. Prepare for mood whiplash, she’s a happy person.

Flirt

Chapter Notes

Arc II - Einherjar
Part I - Flirt

tw: Blood and violence.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Fareeha's mother was fighting with the woman that Fareeha had been flirting with for over a year. Which... wasn't exactly pleasant for Fareeha.

In fact it was almost painfully awkward for her, even if the two women were too polite and professional to actually fight.

Angela in particular was always perfectly polite to Ana in a way that set Fareeha's teeth on edge. Nothing she did could ever be interpreted as impolite or aggressive, but it was such a departure from Angela's warm and friendly behavior that it might as well have been. Ana apparently agreed with Fareeha's assessment, because she had stopped trying to apologize to Angela after her second attempt had been met with a smile and 'thank you'. Ana just avoided Angela now.

Which seemed to be for the best, interacting with Angela seemed to make Ana miserable. It actually made both of them miserable if Fareeha was being honest, Angela was just much better at hiding it. Fareeha wouldn't be surprised if no one else noticed just how *upset* Angela got after talking with Ana. But Fareeha noticed.

Fareeha wasn't particularly happy with her, but seeing her mother unhappy and guilty was not something Fareeha enjoyed. Seeing *Angela* upset was somehow even worse. At least Fareeha had experience with Ana being upset, this thing with Angela was unpleasantly novel.

She hated the situation and she hated that there didn't seem to be anything she could actually *do* about it.

There was history there, bad blood and betrayals that Fareeha just did not know enough about. They had worked together for well over a decade, and there had to have been a lot of emotion in that relationship for them to hurt each other so much. Fareeha had known Angela for a year, and could count on her hands the amount of times prior to Ana's return Angela had even *looked* angry. And then Ana showed up and Angela had snapped and berated her, Jack, and Torbjorn. Fareeha hadn't even thought Angela was *capable* of getting that angry.

Angela said that it was just the rifle that had upset her, but Fareeha had the suspicion that it wasn't so much that the rifle existed and was being used that truly angered Angela so much as the fact that *Ana* was the one using it. Why else would Angela not be giving Torbjorn and Jack the same distant treatment?

Well, Torbjorn wasn't getting the same treatment. She was still frosty around Jack, but Fareeha privately thought that was because he just hadn't apologized. Because Jack was the kind of man who didn't apologize for things he felt necessary. Which, while admirable, made it hard to like the man.

Fareeha wished she could do something, anything to help.

But she couldn't, not with how little she understood about their relationship.

Relationship, Fareeha grimaced at what that could imply, that probably wasn't the case. It *would* actually explain some things, but she trusted that Angela would have told her if that was the case. Even if she and Angela weren't actually... together. that seemed to be pertinent information regardless.

Thankfully Ana and Angela had gotten very good at avoiding each other so they were almost never in the same room together. And everyone could pretend that everything was normal so long as that stayed the case. Fareeha despised the facade, but she just wanted them to be happy. And pushing on an issue that she did not fully understand wasn't going to make *anyone* happy.

For now, pretending things were normal was what was best.

And as much as Fareeha didn't like pretending things were okay when they weren't, what was normal for her and Angela was something she very much enjoyed. Especially considering how infrequently that they were alone together. They were both such busy people that if they didn't make time to spend together, they typically wouldn't get any.

Of course, sometimes fate just threw Fareeha a bone. Like now, she was stuck on a plane ride with Angela to provide backup for Reinhardt, McCree, and Ana. They were escorting a delivery of something through an abandoned town, old tech from the Omnic War. Fareeha didn't know exactly what it was, but she knew Talon wanted it.

And denying Talon something that they wanted? That was practically half of Overwatch's duties.

So she was sitting next to Angela, despite the other available seats, and would be for the next hour or so.

Which. Definitely not the *worst* situation to be in.

And she had very quickly found an entertaining way to spend her time.

"You have been staring at my face for the last five minutes Fareeha," Angela said, she had been making that face that she made when she was fighting a smile for the last minute. But she didn't even look up from her book.

"Well, I forgot my book in my room, so I needed something else to entertain myself with." Fareeha said nonchalantly.

"Ah," Angela said, glancing at where Fareeha was sitting next to her out of the corner of her eye, "And you decided to entertain yourself with me."

The way Angela phrased things sometimes... Even now, Fareeha wasn't sure if Angela was fucking with her or not. Or maybe Fareeha just had a dirty mind.

"Yes." Fareeha said, sometimes just being honest got the best reactions out of Angela. And that was what most of this was, Fareeha doing and saying various things to elicit a smile or laugh out of Angela. Although recently Fareeha had started to suspect that Angela was playing the same game with her, and if that was the case Fareeha was probably losing. Badly. "I've been enjoying myself."

"Is my face really that amusing?" Angela asked, with amused bemusement, she still wasn't

looking at Fareeha, but she was just pretending to read now. Her eyes weren't moving. Fareeha noticed things like that.

Probably because she was still staring at her.

"To me it is," Fareeha said honestly. "Although *amusing* feels like the wrong word."

Angela finally looked at her, and gave her that *look* in response. The one full of amused affection. Fareeha had gotten pretty damn good at getting that one. "Then what word would you use, Fareeha?"

"Hmm," Fareeha actually gave it some thought for a moment, she wanted something true of course. But she also wanted something that Angela wouldn't expect. Some exaggeratedly nice adjective, "I think your face is... *delightful*."

And in that moment Angela's face was truly 'delightful' as she lit up with a smile and a laugh. Fareeha couldn't help but smile gently in response. Angela was always smiling, but Fareeha questioned how genuine most of those smiles were, and Angela didn't really laugh much. Fareeha thought that it was always a lovely thing to hear. And the way her bangs shook across her eyes as she did made a very entrancing picture.

Angela's eyes were still sparkling with delight as her laughter slowed. Tilting her head to the side, she considered Fareeha for a moment. Fareeha struck a smile in response, glad she wasn't wearing her helmet yet.

That would be why she was losing this contest, Angela just had to *look* at her for Fareeha to make an embarrassing face.

Angela hummed, her face still tilted consideringly as she said, "Hmm, I've always thought your face was rather charming, strikingly so in fact."

Fareeha didn't say anything for a moment as her face heated in response.

Angela looked even more amused by that.

"Well," Angela said, putting her book away and facing Fareeha with a mischievous smile, "Feel free to delight yourself with my face anytime."

And... For the first time in a long time, Fareeha wished she hadn't joined the army. Hadn't spent so long in the army and with HSI. Because she was sure that a normal person wouldn't immediately read *filthy* innuendo into that statement, and she could only blame it on all of the dirty jokes that she had heard over the years. Angela just couldn't have been implying what Fareeha had just thought. She just *couldn't have*.

Fareeha just stared at Angela for a moment, feeling her face burn in mortification. Under Angela's bemused gaze, she buried her face in her hands and groaned in embarrassment, prompting another fit of confused laughter from Angela. She felt Angela gently pat her back through her armor and wondered what Angela thought she was embarrassed about. Because she just *couldn't have meant* what Fareeha thought. She couldn't even be *aware* of the innuendo there.

"I actually quite liked being called delightful," Angela said consolingly. She thought Fareeha was embarrassed about complimenting Angela. Which was kind of adorable of her. "It was quite the novel compliment. I don't think I've ever been called delightful before. It's not typically used as a physical descriptor, and I don't think it fits my personality."

"I think it does," Fareeha said, her voice muffled by her hands. "Fit your personality I mean."

“Well, I think you might be a bit biased,” Angela said teasingly, her hand still on Fareeha's back.

And there it was, Angela sort-of bringing up the fact that they had something *more*, to their relationship.

They weren't together in a romantic sense. They hadn't done anything except flirt. But they flirted *a lot*. And they had been doing so for a long time. Fareeha didn't even mind the current state of their relationship, it was comfortable and enjoyable. Qualities that Fareeha needed more of in her life.

This made Fareeha happy. And she really couldn't ask for more than that.

She was happy with the status quo of their relationship. No matter what everyone else implied.

Fareeha tilted her head, looking at Angela while keeping her head in her hands. Angela was just... looking at her. Her gaze was fond and there was the smallest of smiles playing at the corner of her lips.

She was beautiful.

“I think I might be too.” Fareeha said softly.

They sat there for a moment, just smiling at each other. And Fareeha was content in a way that she so rarely was these days.

She was just *such* a sap.

Angela broke their affectionate staring contest first, reclining in her seat and asking, “So what did you do to entertain yourself before you had my face to delight yourself with?”

Fareeha fought not to flush at the maybe-implied innuendo and laughed. The question was funny, even if the answer wasn't, “Hmm. Back when I was with the army, I would often just sit and brood silently.”

“Really? You don't seem the type.” Angela said, giving Fareeha a considering look.

It had been over ten years ago. Fareeha had changed a lot. Most of the time she even thought she had changed for the better.

“I'm really not, ” Fareeha admitted, “But I was not in a happy place then. And I was trying very hard to be professional and respectable.” Those were some of the worst years of her life, when she had rebelled against her mother so much that she had forgotten how to be happy. When Ana had died... It had taken Fareeha years and the concentrated effort of her first commander at HSI for Fareeha to finally loosen up. And even then, it only really happened after he had died.

“But are you in a happy place now?” Angela asked, and she looked genuinely concerned. Which was nice.

“Yes, my time at Helix did a lot for my frame of mind, getting out of my mother's shadow and doing something *important* with my time and life was what I needed. Learning when to be professional and when I could relax was also something that did me a lot of good. It took me far too long to learn that my sense of professionalism did not need to extend outside of the battlefield.”

“So how you are in combat was how you acted *all the time* ?” Angela sounded disturbed at the

thought.

"I was even worse." The person she was in the army would never have tolerated the battlefield chatter that she did now.

Angela made a face as she said, "I don't think you would have handled being in Overwatch if that were still the case."

"Oh no, Overwatch is less professional than the Helix basketball team." Fareeha said emphatically. "I would have been more miserable than Jack."

Angela looked amused at the comparison, "What about when you were with Helix? What would you do before missions then?"

"Normal pre-mission things I suppose. Talk, joke, make plans for what we were going to do afterwards."

"So pretty much this?" Angela asked, laughing.

"In some ways, yes. In others, very much not." Fareeha said dryly, she had never flirted with her teammates before. Tariq probably would have fainted the second Fareeha tried. Which would have been funny, shame that she would never get the chance to try it.

Allah yarhamu, Tariq.

Mentally shaking off her reverie. Fareeha looked at Angela thoughtfully, "What about you? I have a hard time imagining what you were like when you were younger." Fareeha paused, "Even if I did actually know you back then."

Angela wrinkled her nose in remembrance, "I went on my first mission when I was seventeen, and I spent the whole ride nauseous and compulsively checking my armor." She smiled fondly before she continued, "Reinhardt tried to distract me, but I don't think it worked. I was quite rude to him if I remember correctly. "

"I wasn't the nicest person back then." Angela said, her voice nostalgic but sad, "I was so angry and cynical for so long, but trying to do the right thing. I think Overwatch did for me what Helix did for you."

"I still can't believe that you were ever an angry person." It just didn't mesh with the picture Fareeha had of Angela. Even when she had known her when Fareeha was a child, Angela had been always been kind to her.

"I was. But I got tired of being so angry all the time, so I worked to be *better*," Angela said, sounding unhappy at the memories, "Better at managing my temper, better at stopping it. And I like myself much more now."

Fareeha didn't really think that being an angry person was something was something people just got better from. But she had no reason to believe Angela wasn't telling the truth.

"Well, I can't speak for how you were before, but I like who you are now too." Fareeha said, trying to cheer Angela up from her sad memories.

Angela gave her a grateful look, she seemed more thankful and relieved than Fareeha thought was due.

Changing the subject back to more cheerful territory, Angela said, "Well, we've talked and joked,

only one thing left to do. What do you want to do after this is over?"

Fareeha had a stupid idea, she smirked as she leaned towards conspiratorially, Angela followed suit indulgently, "Well, it will be very late by the time we get back, I was thinking that we could have another one of our *midnight adventures*."

The fact that they had leaned in meant that Fareeha had a good view of the expression of utter incomprehension that fell across Angela's face. Fareeha grinned as Angela looked progressively more confused, and then Fareeha had a good view of the sudden realization that crossed her face. When Angela threw her head back and *laughed* harder than Fareeha had ever seen her laugh before, she had a good view of that too. Angela's face was, in fact, delightful to Fareeha.

Fareeha smiled in satisfaction as she watched Angela's shoulders shake and listened to her laughter. Angela tried to compose herself, one of her hands was covering her mouth, and her eyes were closed tight as she struggled to calm herself. Then she opened her eyes and looked at Fareeha's grin and snorted loudly, and broke, her laughs echoing through the plane.

"Is- is that what we're calling them now?" Angela asked, breath catching after she had finally stopped laughing.

"That's what I call them," Fareeha Lied. Blatantly.

"I feel like 'midnight adventures' implies something more dramatic than drinking hot chocolate and reading books together." Angela said, looking like she was on the verge of laughing again.

"Books can be adventures," Fareeha said plainly, struggling to keep a straight face.

Angela gave her that *look* of amused affection again. Fareeha loved that look, "I suppose I can't argue with that. That sounds lovely, let's do that."

"Great," Fareeha said, smiling at her.

They were still leaning in, so their faces were very close together. Close enough that Fareeha could see Angela's eyes flick down to her lips, something she couldn't help but smirk at. She was also close enough to catch Angela suddenly look over Fareeha's shoulder and rear slightly in surprise.

"Hiya!"

Fareeha felt her smile drop immediately at the greeting from behind her while Angela's own smile turned very amused. Fareeha didn't know if it was her own reaction that prompted the amusement or the sudden arrival of their new company. Either way, her voice was warm in a very different way when she spoke, "Lena, aren't you supposed to be flying the plane?"

Fareeha heard the grin in Lena's voice as she responded, "Yeah... about that. I've a spot of bad news. Some good news too, but mostly bad."

"Oh?" Angela asked, still looking amused as Fareeha sighed and turned to face Lena. Alone time was apparently over.

Lena looked entirely too satisfied to be the bearer of bad news. She was leaning against the entrance to the cockpit of the plane, wearing her characteristic aviator's jacket and grin. She took a moment to waggle her eyebrows suggestively at Fareeha, before composing herself and reporting. Lena had the unfortunate habit of constantly trying to tease Fareeha about her relationship with Angela. She had gotten progressively less subtle about it over time. And she hadn't started particularly subtle.

“Good news, we’re here. Bad news, Talon’s here and they have rocket launchers, the fighting is too heavy for me to comfortably land this bird at the point. We might have to do an air drop.” Lena said, looking chipper.

Fareeha had never met someone that she could describe as 'chipper' until she met Lena.

Fareeha sighed as she responded, "An air drop? Again?"

Lena nodded vigorously, her grin splitting her face.

“This happens far too often Lena,” Angela said flatly, but Fareeha could see the amused glint in her eye.

“I know, right!?” Lena said, gesturing her arms out helplessly, “It’s so weird.”

“Uh huh, and it happens significantly more often to us, compared to *everyone else* in Overwatch.” Angela said faux-sternly, “I’m starting to doubt your skills as a pilot Lena.”

“I’m sure I don’t know what it is you’re on about Doctor, it’s all just a coincidence,” Lena said, waving her hand dismissively, “I’m just gonna go set the ship to land in that convenient field I saw a couple miles back, after it drops us off of course.”

With that, Lena blinked back inside the cockpit, leaving only a blue trail and the slamming door as evidence. Angela gave Fareeha a fond but long suffering look as she stood up and grabbed her staff, before she spoke out loudly.

“Is this the same type of coincidence as the one that where you keep volunteering to be our pilot? When we are the only other people in Overwatch capable of an air drop?”

There was an audible gasp from the cockpit, before Lena was suddenly in front of them again, adopting a hurt expression. “I would never! That would be highly irresponsible of me, and a complete abuse of my authority as a pilot.”

“Uh huh,” Angela said, tapping her staff against her shoulder as she looked at Lena with a stern expression and a raised eyebrow.

Lena tried to put on a chagrined expression, it didn't work when she looked like she was on the verge of laughing. She gave up pretty quickly.

“All right, all right, you caught me.” Lena said, chuckling as she sauntered past the two to open the door. The sounds of gunshots and the wind penetrated the cabin as she spun around to face them, “I do keep arranging to fly you guys around, but that’s just because I *really* like listening to you two flirt.”

Fareeha glared at the younger girl from her seat, the light from the open door framing her as she rapidly backed up, “It is *seriously* adorable.”

Fareeha glared *harder*. "Get out."

“Cheers Captain! Doc!” Lena chirped before she blinked backwards, out of the floating plane. She pulled out her guns as she did a happy little twist and shout in the air before gravity took her out of Fareeha's sight. At this point Fareeha had seen it enough times that she no longer felt compelled to look down to see Lena fall.

Tracer would arrive at the battle safely.

Fareeha sighed as she stood up and grabbed her helmet. Putting it on, she looked at a still-smiling Angela, "That girl is a *menace*."

Angela peered out of the plane, calmly taking in the situation on the ground as she completely ignored Fareeha. "I still have no idea how she cancels out her momentum. But she has been enjoying it since she's learned how to do it."

Fareeha could only sigh in response, walking over to the edge as well.

In Lena's defense, it *was* pretty bad. Fareeha wouldn't want to land a plane in this mess either. They were high up in the air, high enough that people looked like ants, but she could see the sparks of gunfire and the flares of explosions. She could *hear* it. Reinhardt and McCree were huddled behind Reinhardt's shield in front of a truck, and there were groups of Talon agents bombarding them with bullets and explosives. McCree was doing his best to take out as many of them as he could.

Frankly, she didn't want to land *herself* in this mess.

But, duty calls.

Angela apparently felt the same way, as she suddenly tensed when McCree was hit by a stray bullet and walked off the edge, her wings flaring long enough to look at Fareeha and salute with her staff. She teasingly said, "Age before beauty," as she floated below Fareeha's view. Looking over the edge, Fareeha watched as Mercy deactivated her wings and dropped like a stone.

Fareeha watched in mild concern as Angela gained speed fast. When she had just hit the height of the tallest buildings, her wings flared again and she swept gracefully across the air. Fareeha's visor zoomed in as she landed running next to where Reinhardt had set up his shield, McCree just behind him tipped his hat in greeting as Mercy's healing stream connected to him.

Pharah's visor did not allow her to hear Reinhardt's greeting, but she could easily imagine it.

"I work with a bunch of smartasses." She muttered to herself as she stepped off into open air.

For a long second she just fell, her head tucked down into her chest to stop the wind from flowing into her visor. She listened to the wind before she activated her thrusters and jet across the battlefield, her visor picking out her allies' positions and their projected route. Working with Overwatch meant working with Athena, which meant being on the side with the best real time battlefield intel in the world. She dodged a rocket that Talon sent at her with a flare of her thrusters and launched a rocket in response. They didn't dodge nearly so well. She activated her coms, "Pharah, reporting for duty."

"Good of you to join us Captain!" Lena called jubilantly,

"Tracer," Pharah said dryly, hovering for a moment as she took in the situation from much closer. "There's a group of Talon agents fifteen meters to your Northwest, behind the wall." She would have fired a rocket at them herself, but Tracer was fast enough to accidentally run into her attacks from a distance that was usually safe. She fired another rocket at a group who thought they could sneak up behind Reinhardt instead. They scattered.

There was the characteristic rush of Tracer's blink over her com, before, "Hi there!" Gunshots, "Thanks Captain!"

She was sucking up. Lena knew that she liked being called Captain.

"Your ass is mine for physical conditioning when we get back to Gibraltar Tracer." Fareeha said

flatly. She had neither the heart nor the authority to really discipline Lena, but she could make Lena do ten push ups a second for as long as it took her to collapse. Then wait for her to recover before making her follow Fareeha's exercise regime. Tracer was in good shape, but Fareeha was in better. She would feel worse about it if Lena didn't blatantly enjoy the company and challenge.

She might be a little nicer on Lena than she normally would after that 'adorable' comment in the plane, depending on if she kept sucking up, flattery did in fact work on her.

“I’m not sure Mercy would like you claiming my ass Captain.” Tracer called back.

She wouldn't be nicer.

Angela snorted. “I think I can make an exception for you Tracer.” The *traitor*.

“I can’t blame you,” Tracer said thoughtfully, “It *is* a great ass.” McCree snorted over the com before making an agreeable noise.

Smartasses, she thought as she landed on the highest roof along the projected route of the payload. It was only eight stories, but she could see everything she needed to up here, there weren’t that many tall buildings that remained standing in a place this abandoned. All of the major Talon activity had stopped when her group showed up, and they were grouping up to retreat. Evidently she and Tracer were pretty good deterrents.

For good reason really, Fareeha thought as she sent four rockets to four different groups of Talon agents. Maiming those that she didn't kill and scattering those that she didn't maim. Tracer had ambushed five groups and several stragglers in the time since Fareeha had landed. It was hard for people on foot with conventional weaponry to compete with a flying rocket launcher and a person fast enough to effectively be three places at once.

Victory through overwhelming fire power. The best kind of victory.

“There are others on the com you know.” Ana said mildly.

“I know! Hi other Cap!” Tracer said. *Chipperly*.

She was going to kill Lena and frame it like it was a training accident.

“Hello Lena,” Ana said, sounding far too amused for Fareeha’s liking.

At least Reinhardt wouldn't laugh at her, Fareeha thought flatly, as she watched Reinhardt, McCree, and Mercy advance with the truck carrying the package. There was no one on the road in front of them, and she saw the blue flash of Tracer as she passed through the alleys, clearing out anyone she found. She didn't find many more people near the others as Talon retreated, and she didn't feel like chasing the ones farther away off. Ana was on top of a small building a little ways behind the truck, she would need to catch up with the rest soon.

Relaxing a bit, Fareeha allowed herself to sigh at their antics, knowing that everyone could hear her. Angela’s faint chuckle made her feel a little better. Just a bit. She honestly wasn’t that upset, if she was actually bothered by the lack of communication discipline she would’ve gone insane by now.

Things had quieted down, the Talon agents had apparently decided to retreat after her group had arrived. Time would tell whether the retreat was permanent or not.

Which gave them time to regroup, Pharah thought. And evidently Reinhardt agreed as his voice came over the channel.

“Pharah! It is has been far too long!” It hadn’t even been two weeks since they had seen each other. His genuine friendliness brought a begrudging smile to her lips, “How are you?”

“Working,” Pharah said mildly, feeling bad for shutting him down but not wanting to encourage the less disciplined members of their team by responding genuinely. He would understand, and they would have plenty of time to catch up after they had done their jobs. And their jobs would be done soon if the sudden lack of Talon activity was any sign. They arrive within the hour if they went uninterrupted. She made a note to buy Reinhardt a drink the next time they went out as she jetted into the air again, watching out for any more Talon agents.

“Ahh, that is a real shame.” McCree drawled, “You should work on that.”

Not that they really needed any encouragement from her. But she hoped that if she ignored them long enough they would stop one day.

Unlikely. They were smartasses, the lot of them.

“Reinhardt; you, Mercy, and McCree are clear to advance.” Pharah said, deciding to ignore the chatter for now, “There is no one on the main street before our destination. There shouldn’t be anyone but watch out for the alleys. If they’re smart they will have pulled back. Ana, meet up with them, I’ll keep an eye out ahead. And Tracer, clean up any stragglers within two blocks of the payload.”

“Understood/Alright/You got it!”

Fareeha hovered for a minute as she watched them, and monitored the area around them. And pointedly ignored the conversation Reinhardt was having with Tracer. It occurred to Fareeha that she was instinctively taking command of people that were almost universally older and more experienced than her. And they were listening to her. Which made sense she supposed, all of them had been acting as lone operatives for almost a decade while she had been commanding teams for twelve years now. Even if they had previous command experience, they were rusty and were willing to cede control to her. Jack was just about the only person whose authority superseded her own in combat.

Still, a year ago the thought of people like Reinhardt, McCree, Mercy, or even her *mother* following her orders in a battle scenario would have filled her with disbelief and awe.

Now she just wished that they would save the chatter for after the fight, Fareeha thought as McCree started laughing at something Lena said.

Pharah swept over the street ahead of the others, her visor not picking up any threats. Talon apparently had completely retreated, “I don’t think there will be enemy reinforcements for now, the skies are cle-”

A sharp crack rang from the building across the street and Pharah felt a piercing pain shoot through her chest as the armor on her left shoulder exploded into shrapnel and all of the air left her lungs in a strangled gasp. Fareeha spun, the impact of the shot throwing off her balance enough to send her flying to the side and into the second shot.

Sniper. She thought as the breath was knocked out of her again.

“Damn.” Pharah snarled as she tried to catch her breath. She launched a rocket into the building she had seen the muzzle flash in as she cut her thrusters and dropped towards the closest building. No more shots came as she landed on the roof and stumbled onto her knees behind a wall. Either she had got them, or they had stopped shooting to evade. But they had definitely gotten her.

Damn.

Two bullets, The first one had pierced the armor on her chest on entry and destroyed the armor on her left shoulder on exit. The other had hit just penetrated the armor on her stomach, she hadn't even felt the bullet impact the armor on her back.

"Pharah, are you injured?" Angela asked, her voice concerned.

Vastly different bullet wounds from the same point, which meant either two snipers had taken a shot from the same place in quick succession, or-

"Widowmaker is here." Pharah said, her words and her strained voice answering Angela's question for her. "Get behind Reinhardt."

"Do you need immediate attention?" Angela asked sharply.

Fareeha breathed deeply, trying not to groan. The shot to her chest had shattered her armor on entry and sent shards of shrapnel into her chest and shoulder. She couldn't move her left arm, either it had destroyed the pivot on her armor or it had damaged her shoulder. Judging from the damage to her arm and the excruciating pain in her shoulder, she was willing to bet it was her arm.

"...I don't think I can take off and land and still remain operational." Fareeha said, that sounded better than saying that she would pass out if she landed, right? She might pass out if she stayed here, she realized as she coughed wetly. She tasted blood. Great. She had damaged her lungs, "And you can't jump up here with Widowmaker around."

"So yes." Angela said, "Ana, can you reach her?"

"Not unless she boosts up, and if I can hit her Widowmaker can." Ana said grimly. That didn't sound appealing to Fareeha, she didn't want to be the target that finally decided who was the better sniper.

She needed healing, Widowmaker was going to shoot her if she tried to get somewhere she could get it.

So she needed to distract Widowmaker.

Fareeha coughed, blood dripping down her lips as the pain made her vision fuzzy.

And she needed to do it *fast*.

"Tracer, do you know where I am." Fareeha asked quietly, more to conserve her breath and energy than to prevent Widowmaker from listening. She could see anything Fareeha sent coming anyway.

"Yes Captain," Tracer said seriously.

"The building across the street to the north and two to the east. Fourth floor, sixth window from the west. Keep her busy."

"With pleasure." Tracer's voice was as dark as Fareeha ever heard it. Full of steely determination that Fareeha didn't like hearing out of the happy woman.

She could see the western wall of the building from where she was hiding. So she had a clear view as Tracer blinked in almost immediately and, putting her guns away, grabbed a ledge. With a

blink, she pulled herself up three stories and around the corner, she seemed to hover there for a moment as she pulled out her guns and shot the window, blinking inside instantaneously after. Fareeha lost sight of her after that. The rapid sound of Tracer's gun was joined by the cracks of Widowmaker's rifle.

That should keep her distracted.

She didn't bother to stand up as she activated her jets, scorching the legs of her suit as she launched into the air. She was thankful that her suit did most of the work, she wasn't entirely sure if she could move her feet, that gut shot might be more serious than she thought. She immediately dropped below the skyline. There was no point in not being cautious.

"Mercy," Pharah called, she would need healing while in the air. Angela's tech was amazing, and could even resurrect the recently dead. But it actually couldn't wake up someone who had passed out from pain and blood loss. And she was almost sure the impact of landing would make her pass out. But she hadn't even needed to say anything, as Mercy was already flying up to meet her.

Mercy's healing stream always made Pharah feel uncomfortably warm, but so did seeing Angela smile, so Fareeha wasn't sure which it was. But either way she couldn't help the smile on her face as Mercy joined her in the air. Blood loss was a hell of a thing, but the healing stream worked quickly. She was pretty sure there was still a bullet inside of her, along with shards of her own armor, but by the time she met Mercy mid-air she had healed around it all to the point that everything was almost painless, the only discomfort being shards of her armor sticking into her shoulder. She could even move her left arm again, with difficulty.

Angela's tech never ceased to amaze Fareeha.

Angela always amazed Fareeha.

Her dazed awe was interrupted when she heard Tracer yell over the com.

"Shite! Widowmaker is in the air!" Tracer shouted, her voice sounding strained.

Fareeha didn't realize what Tracer meant for a moment, thinking for a moment that Widowmaker had escaped. It took seeing the woman flying through the air above and behind Angela, pointing a very large gun at them, for realization to dawn on her. Widowmaker had managed to dodge Tracer and was aiming at them.

Angela had caught on almost immediately and had cut off power to her wings, quickly dropping for an instant before a gunshot sounded and the space around her head exploded.

Fareeha seemed to see in slow motion, looking down as a spray of white metal and blood flew from Angela's head and it whipped to the side from the impact, blood and blonde hair whipping across her face as her entire body followed the spin of the impact slackly before her wings flared and stabilized her.

Fareeha cancelled her thrusters to catch up to Angela's fall. She was falling almost horizontally and her head hung limply and covered in blood, the sight of her like this sent a thread of horror down Fareeha's spine.

Angela!

With her heavier armor, Fareeha rapidly caught up with Angela and fell below her. She was slightly below Angela when her wings flared fully to stop herself from falling and started to reorient herself. Fareeha barely had the time to be relieved when she saw her move when another gunshot sounded and Fareeha was sprayed with metal and blood as the armor around Angela's

chest exploded out. The side of Angela's face that Fareeha could see through the blood looked dazed as her wings cut out and she fell, reaching out towards Fareeha as she started to free fall. They had been falling too long, they were too close to the ground.

"No!" Fareeha heard Tracer shout, a heart wrenching sound of rage echoing in Fareeha's com as she boosted forward and caught Angela, the Caduceus staff falling the last ten feet to clatter on the ground as Fareeha gently lowered them. "Not again!"

Tracer made a guttural sound and Fareeha heard the tempo of her gunfire pick up, the sound of her blink sounding multiple times as she chased down Widowmaker. She heard a cry of pain that wasn't Lena's.

Not again. Lena's words reverberated in Fareeha's mind as she held Angela in her arms.

Fareeha could barely pay any attention to that though as she looked at the woman in her arms. The right side of her face was a mangled mess of blood and white shrapnel, the bullet had at least hit the halo, if not Angela's head. And there was a hole the size of Fareeha's fist in the chest of Angela's armor. There was only blood, gore, and a shredded lump of metal in that hole, and Fareeha couldn't stand to look at it. The shot was just to the right of her chest. Right where her heart was. There was no way for anyone to survive an injury like that without Mercy's Caduceus staff.

And the staff was useless without the halo.

Not again.

Angela's one visible wide eye found Fareeha's, that bright blue eye surrounded by the splattered red of her own blood. Angela put a hand against the damaged chest of her own armor, it went *in* more than it ever should and Fareeha felt breathless in a way that had nothing to do with any injury. Angela's open eye fluttered closed and she convulsed in Fareeha's arms, arching her back and sending a rush of blood out of the hole in her chest.

And Fareeha could only watch and remember all of the people who had died in her arms before, with lesser wounds than this.

Not again...

Fareeha could only stare in growing panic at Angela's slack expression and twitching body. Angela's mouth opened and closed soundlessly, blood pooling at the corner of her mouth. Angela arched almost out of Fareeha's grip, mouth open in a wordless cry. Then she slumped back bonelessly into Fareeha's arms.

Then she stilled and did not move.

Not again!

"Fareeha, Angela! Are you okay?" Ana asked over the com, there were buildings in between their positions. Ana couldn't heal Angela from there.

Fareeha wasn't sure Ana could heal Angela at all.

She wasn't sure Angela was alive, wasn't sure she wasn't holding the corpse of the woman she...

Not again... Not *Angela*.

"Mercy is down, gunshots to the head and chest." Pharah heard herself say a quaver in her voice.

She was cradling Angela in her arms as she watched Angela's open mouth, her chest wasn't moving. She wasn't breathing, she wasn't moving. She wasn't... "I'm moving to your position."

She had stood up and shifted her grip on Angela when Fareeha heard her groan weakly, a wet gurgling sound that brought Fareeha's desperate gaze down to Angela's face. Down to eyes that opened to look hazily at Fareeha. Fareeha almost collapsed in surprised relief.

Alhamdulillah! Angela was still alive.

Relief filled Fareeha before Angela weakly leaned away from her and twisted almost entirely out of her arms as she retched; blood and viscera falling out of her mouth as she coughed. She retched a couple more times and Fareeha watched helplessly as Angela spat out a shard of blood covered metal.

"Tracer, is Widowmaker occupied," Pharah asked as Angela collapsed back into her arms, her body still convulsing. Angela was alive, but she *needed* to get to Ana. Soon. The pack that powered Angela's suit had been hit, and she wouldn't heal without it.

"I've got her," Tracer snarled, her breathing heavy. Fareeha disliked hearing the normally peppy girl so angry, but she liked holding a bleeding Angela less.

"Good." Pharah said darkly as she launched off. Her gut wrenched when Angela made an abrupt gurgling sound at the sudden movement, blood dripping from her mouth. She hovered for a moment to gather her bearings. She was starting to head in the direction of Ana and the others when she heard Tracer.

"Widowmaker is doing it again!" Tracer cried desperately. Fareeha didn't need a moment to think this time, as she immediately cut her jets and plummeted toward the ground but she saw Widowmaker in the air, pulling up her gun and aiming at them with nothing but open air between them.

She was *smiling*.

Fareeha couldn't get out of the way fast enough.

She couldn't even fire a rocket at her while she was holding Angela. She was dead in the air. She was just about to fire her thrusters to try and put herself in between Widowmaker and Angela when, with a burst of blue, Tracer was suddenly in between them. And she said darkly, "But I've got her."

"Pulse bomb out," Tracer said with vicious satisfaction as she threw the bomb at the airborne Widowmaker. Fareeha fell out of view of Widowmaker before it exploded, but she got a clear view of Widowmaker as she stopped aiming and looked at the bomb, a horrified expression on her face. Fareeha landed roughly, falling to her knees and almost dropping Angela as she heard the explosion and the cry of pain as Widowmaker was caught up in it. "Right on target, Widowmaker is down Pharah. You are clear."

Pharah sighed in relief before wincing as Angela let out a gut wrenching gurgle, Fareeha immediately started to stand up to launch off when she felt a wet, trembling hand hit her gently on the side of her face, under her visor. Fareeha stared at Angela completely baffled as she raised her index finger shakily. Angela leaned over and retched again, something landing beneath them with a wet thud. And then Fareeha heard the most beautiful sound, Angela taking a deep gasping breath.

Angela was breathing.

But she *still* had a gaping hole in her chest.

Angela took a deep breath before speaking weakly, "I am going to throw up on you if you launch again," Angela sounded... exhausted. But not like she had just been shot with an armor piercing round.

Fareeha stared wide-eyed at Angela's placid expression, "*I don't care*, we need to get you to Ana. Your suit is broken, you can't heal yourself!"

"Is Angela okay Fareeha?" Ana asked, concerned.

Oh, right. Angela's com unit was in her halo.

"I'm fine Fareeha," Angela said quietly.

"Bullshit," Fareeha said fiercely. Looking at the extensive amounts of blood covering the both of them. Looking at the blood that covered the right side of Angela's face from forehead to chest, at the blood colored hole in Angela's armor.

Angela shook her head weakly, her hand shakily moving towards her chest. Reaching in with her trembling hand, she rubbed away the blood pooled there and revealed a hint of the pale skin underneath. "I'm fine."

Now that Fareeha was paying attention, she could see the round definition of Angela's chest through the blood. All of her flesh had regenerated, it was just covered in blood. Looking closely, even her face had stopped bleeding, already crusting on her face.

"Fareeha? Angela? Answer me." Ana called, sounding terrified.

"I've lost a lot of blood, but other than that I am fine." Angela said, wrinkling her nose in disgust as she finally opened her other eye. Her eyes were calm even as one of them was almost entirely covered in blood. Looking up at Fareeha's still stricken face, she smiled softly and repeated, "I'm fine, but please do not bring us into the air again. I really don't want to throw up."

"Fareeha!" Ana demanded.

"Mercy is fine, her halo was damaged so she's off coms," Fareeha answered distantly, feeling... drained. Her voice sounded wrong as she repeated, "She's fine and healed. We'll... be approaching your position on foot."

"She's fine." Fareeha said again.

She almost believed herself.

"Understood, we've already arrived at the destination. Talon has started to retreat out of the area." Ana said, still sounding concerned.

"Take your time ladies," McCree said, and his casual words didn't do anything to disguise the relief in his voice. "We've got things handled over here."

At any other moment, that comment would feel like a teasing dig at Fareeha and Angela's sort-of relationship. But now... now it was just greatly appreciated.

"...Doc's okay Captain?" Tracer asked, her desperate sounding voice throwing Fareeha back into the moment. She didn't have the luxury of being shell-shocked right now.

"She's fine. She's lost a lot of blood, but has been healed and is no longer injured," Fareeha said, "We'll meet up with the rest of you in under ten minutes."

"Okay," Tracer said, sounding tremendously relieved, "I'm staying on Widowmaker, but she retreated into a few of her venom mines. She's hurt and can't go far, but I can't see or get to her." Tracer managed to sound relieved and frustrated at the same time.

"Don't be reckless Tracer, fall back if you need to." Fareeha said. As much as she wanted to catch or kill Widowmaker, she was the world's greatest assassin for a reason. And a spider was at its most likely to bite when it was cornered.

"Reckless? *Me*? It's like you don't know me at all Captain," Tracer said, trying and failing to sound jovial and carefree.

"Tracer," Fareeha said flatly, "You're more important than her, stay safe."

"...Yes Captain." Tracer responded, and Fareeha could only hope that this time she would listen to her.

The com line lapsed into silence, and Fareeha realized that she was just standing still, carrying Angela in her arms.

Fareeha was trembling.

She felt... she didn't know how she felt.

She just took a shaky breath.

And another.

She started walking. Looking straight ahead. The sight of Angela's face, so covered in blood, made her breath catch and something deep in her gut clench. She wanted to throw up.

But she didn't.

She just walked.

She walked for almost a minute in silence, trying desperately to compose herself.

It didn't work.

Angela shifted in her arms and looked directly at her. It probably wasn't a very comfortable position.

"...You know I can walk Fareeha," Angela said with a faint smile. And Fareeha looked at her. The right side of her face was still covered in blood, and her right eye wouldn't open fully with all the blood in the way.

The sight made Fareeha sick. Images of Angela floating in front of her smiling that same smile, of a spray of blood and gore flying from her head.

The sudden surety that she had watched Angela die right in front of her.

The limp body in her arms overlapping with so many others in her memory.

And being able to do *nothing*.

“Angela,” Fareeha said, her voice was thick, “Just- just let me...”

Fareeha flexed her arms around Angela. She didn't have any actual feeling in her arms, being prostheses under armor. She did have a simulated sense of touch, but it was just a limited gradient of pressure. But it seemed like the feeling of Angela in her arms was all she had right now.

Angela felt *so small* in her arms.

Angela looked at her. Fareeha looked away. She was very glad that her visor covered most of her face, because she was sure there wasn't an attractive expression behind it.

“Okay Fareeha.” Angela said quietly, and she shifted until she could rest her head against the right shoulder of Fareeha's armor.

Angela's voice was gentle, as if she were comforting Fareeha. As if Angela wasn't the one who almost died.

As if *Fareeha* was the one in pain.

And she supposed that maybe she *was*.

Fareeha has always been the sort of person who coped very easily with her own pain and misfortune. She had lost both of her legs when she was a fairly young adult, and hadn't really *gotten* why everyone around her was so upset by it. Prosthetic limbs were good nowadays, and cheap. It wasn't that big of a deal.

She still remembered the look on her mother's face when she said that. It had kept her up that night, and several nights after. But she hadn't *understood it*.

She hadn't understood it then, but then one of the soldiers under her command lost his arm and *then* she had understood. It was so much easier for her to cope with her own pain than it was to deal with the pain of others.

She had lost so many good men and women over the years. Some who had lost their lives. Some who had only lost their careers, and sometimes that was somehow *worse*. She had lost so many people who were both her responsibility and her *friends*.

So many friends lost.

The thought of adding Angela to that list of lost friends made her want to cry.

But she didn't

She just kept walking.

She felt a hand tentatively rest against her cheek. Angela gently brushed under Fareeha's eye with her thumb as Fareeha looked forward.

“You had some blood...” Angela said softly. But she didn't take her hand off of Fareeha's cheek. She didn't stop gently caressing her face with her thumb.

“Probably yours,” Fareeha said after a pause. She couldn't think of anything else to say.

“Probably.” Angela said, sounding worried.

Fareeha didn't say anything.

She just kept walking.

She had lost friends before. Many of them had died right in front of her, some had died in her arms.

She had felt fear for the people she loved. She had felt the desolate loss of watching people she loved die in pain in front of her and not being able to do *anything*. But never had she ever felt such a sense of pure *dread* as she had at the sight of Angela lying in her arms, covered in blood and not breathing.

The feeling that she had almost lost a part of herself that couldn't be replaced like a pair of legs could.

"Fareeha," She didn't look at the bloody woman in her arms.

She just kept walking.

"*Fareeha*," Angela said firmly.

The hand on Fareeha's face pressed on her cheek more firmly, and she let Angela turn her face until she was met with Angela's blood soaked visage. She suppressed the urge to flinch at the sight as Angela leaned in closer looking under Fareeha's visor and directly into her eyes.

"*Fareeha*," Angela said, and she sounded like she was saying something that needed to be heard, "I'm fine."

Fareeha felt her face twist with ugly emotion at that, and she had to fight the urge to cry on Angela's hand.

She was *fine*.

"I'm fine Fareeha," Angela repeated, even more earnestly than before, "And I won't leave you like that."

She leaned in, and maneuvered herself in Fareeha's arms until she could press her forehead against the exposed crook of Fareeha's neck. Her head nestled in the space in between Fareeha's and the pauldron of her armor, it looked very uncomfortable and Fareeha had to be careful not to raise her arm. But Fareeha could feel Angela's shuddering breath on her neck.

Fareeha stopped walking.

"I won't leave you Fareeha," Angela said again, her voice cracked on the word 'leave', "Please trust me on that."

Fareeha looked at Angela, as much as she could without hitting Angela in the face with her visor. She was lying there with her eyes closed and pressed against Fareeha's neck and her hand almost inside of Fareeha's helmet, resting against her cheek. What Angela was saying was important. It was an acknowledgement of how important their relationship was, to both of them, that Angela would describe *dying* as leaving Fareeha. But Fareeha had the feeling that Angela meant something *more* than even that. And Fareeha got the feeling that there was much more to Angela than she knew.

There was so much Fareeha could say, so much she could ask.

How did Angela heal the damage that *had* to have destroyed her heart? As far as Fareeha knew the Caduceus staff was the only way Angela could revive someone.

How did Angela heal *at all* when her Valkyrie suit was inoperational?

What was that mass of metal in her chest?

There was so much that Fareeha did not know about Angela. But there were somethings that she did know. One thing was particularly important.

One of the first real things that Fareeha had learned about Angela was that she almost never lied. And she *never* lied about anything important. She always said what she meant, and she always meant what she said.

So Fareeha had made the decision very early on to trust Angela. About anything. About everything.

And Fareeha had never regretted that decision before.

“Angela...” Fareeha said with a desperation that she hadn't realized she felt. Her voice thick with emotion that Fareeha hadn't heard from herself before. Not in years, “You won’t leave? You won't die?”

So many of the people that she loved had died. And how many of them promised things like that? How many looked her in the eyes and said that they would see each other again? How many of them had known they were liars when they said it?

Fareeha had no respect for liars.

She had no respect for people who gave false hope.

And she had long since stopped believing people who said that they wouldn't die.

“I won’t Fareeha,” Angela said quietly, but with steel in her voice as she kept her face buried in Fareeha's neck, “It will take more than bullets to kill me.”

Fareeha did not believe people who said that they wouldn't die.

“Okay.” Fareeha said, trying to rein in the emotion in her voice.

So many people had told her that, only to be made liars of.

“Okay?” Angela asked quietly, she sounded confused.

No one was invincible.

“Okay.” Fareeha repeated.

No one was unkillable.

“You don’t want to know more?” Angela asked leadingly.

Everybody died. No matter how much she loved them and trusted them.

“Do you want to tell me more?” Fareeha asked back.

She had known so many people who told her that they wouldn't die. They were *liars*.

"...Not right now." Angela said, sounding tired. "Ask me that again sometime."

They were all liars.

"Okay." Fareeha said simply.

And Fareeha did not respect liars.

Fareeha walked with the silence for a while. Trying not to jostle Angela as she walked.

They were almost to the others.

She felt Angela shift and groan weakly into her neck before she spoke up.

"I think I lied before," Angela said softly.

"Hmm?"

"I don't think I could have made the walk," Angela said faintly, "I am very dizzy and nauseous. I think I'll throw up if I open my eyes."

Fareeha paused for a moment, concerned. "Do you have a concussion?" Getting shot in the head would do that.

"Probably, I also feel like crying." Angela said.

"Hmm," Fareeha said, before saying, "Can you not heal the concussion like you did your chest?"

"I didn't feel like letting the automated healing processes have access to my entire brain." Which... was more information than Fareeha was expecting. Automated processes. Fareeha thought automating her brain was fair. But, *entire*?

She was discovering that she really did not know enough about Angela.

They weren't a minute away from the the others, Fareeha didn't see a point in jetting back now. So she just said, "Honestly, I feel like crying too."

"Concussion?"

"Probably not." Fareeha said, "I just feel like crying."

"I'm sorry." Angela said into her neck, so softly that Fareeha could barely hear it.

"It's fine," Fareeha said mildly. "Hardly your fault."

"I don't like seeing you sad, and I don't know how to help you." She said softly.

Concussed Angela was very different from normal Angela.

Sadder.

Fareeha looked at the top of Angela's head out of the corner of her eye. And she couldn't help but say, "You help me with my sadness more than you can ever know."

Angela tried to bury her head deeper into her neck, "I feel like I always make people sad. And I never know how to fix it."

"There's nothing in the world that makes me happier than you," Fareeha said.

Angela gave a shuddering sigh at that, and Fareeha thought she felt something wet against her neck.

"Thank you," Angela said hesitantly, "I'm glad."

People who told her that they wouldn't die were liars. Experience had proved that time and time again.

Loving and trusting people did *nothing* when they died.

Nothing.

So when had Fareeha stopped loving and trusting?

Was it when the last of her original team had died under her command?

Was it the first time she had returned as the sole survivor of a mission?

Was it the second time?

She had always called her team her family. But all that meant was she had to bury her family over and over again.

She said that her team was her family, and she always acted like it.

But at some point she had stopped believing it.

She didn't know when it happened, but at some point she stopped trusting the people she called family. She had stopped loving them.

Because in the end they all died.

They all left her.

She had stopped loving them because it made their deaths *hurt less*.

Then she had joined Overwatch. Then she had met Angela again.

And then Fareeha made the decision to *trust* her.

She didn't regret that decision. To the point that Fareeha believed Angela when she told the lie Fareeha hated most in the world.

She *trusted* Angela. More than Fareeha had ever trusted another person before.

She trusted Angela when she said that she wouldn't die.

And that *terrified* Fareeha.

Because she knew that she was just setting herself up for heartbreak when Angela was proven to be a liar like all the rest.

And Fareeha knew that this was the thing that would truly break her heart.

But she couldn't stop herself from trusting Angela.

Fareeha had stopped trusting. Stopped *loving*.

But she trusted Angela.

And, Fareeha thought as she finally approached the building where Reinhardt and the others were offloading their delivery, she loved Angela.

Fareeha really did love her.

It was past time she admitted it.

It was past time she *acted* like it.

Chapter End Notes

Flirt, WITH DEATH. When I said mood whiplash, I meant within the chapter.

Honestly at this point Fareeha has managed to work herself into her own, almost entirely separate, fic where romance is her prerogative. Love was not supposed to be this prominent, but whatever.

Also, I'm not doing that once a day thing anymore. I'm liking this story a lot and I can't put out the quality of content that I actually want to on that time scale.

Next up, Ana to remind us all that this is a fic about consequences. Unhappy ones typically.

Also: I hate fight scenes, and this is by far my least favorite chapter, but I'll never stop fiddling with it if I don't post it now. The next one will be more my speed.

Wistful

Chapter Notes

Arc II - Einherjar
Part II - Wistful

tw: Blood and violence.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ana had never considered herself to be a particularly sentimental or overly emotional person. She found that it was rather hard to be sentimental person when she killed people for a living. She couldn't let herself dwell on sentiment or deeper meaning to life when she woke up every other night in a cold sweat with the memory of a rifle on her shoulder and the pressure of a trigger at her finger. She wasn't a cold or distant person, she just... tried to not let the world affect her. Much.

But, there were moments.

The type of moments that broke through all of the walls she had surrounded herself with over the years. The type of moments that defined her life.

The moments that made life worth *living*.

Lying in a hospital room in Giza, trembling and sweat soaked, as she saw the most beautiful thing in the world. Looking at her baby girl for the very first time and watching in awe and wonder at the smallest things Fareeha did, like how her toes flexed and her legs kicked as skin met open air for the first time. Ana swore then and there to protect and love her *forever*.

Watching as the man she loved like a brother cried as a beautiful woman wearing a beautiful white dress walked down the aisle towards him. Both of them *glowing* with joy and love as their future together solidified in front of them with each of their vows. Ana knew then that this union was going to last forever; they would be happy together for as long as they both lived.

Meeting the young, dispossessed, and *angry* orphan who had changed the world overnight, and offering her a job and a *home*. The feeling of that *so small* hand in hers as Ana welcomed her into Overwatch, knowing deep in her bones that this was something that would change Overwatch, and the *world*, forever. For the **better**.

There had been so many moments that had shown Ana the unending *good* that there was to be found in life. But sometimes... sometimes it felt as if there was dark and terrible moment for all of the good ones. And then more.

Battling her way into a military hospital, knowing nothing except that her daughter was lying hurt in one of the rooms. The breath crushed out of her chest as she saw her baby girl for the first time in over two years, lying broken and bruised in her bed. Ana's world tilted and fell of its axis as she approached her and stared at the burns that marred Fareeha's face, and the empty space where her legs used to be.

Standing in silence at the home of her brother in arms, a place that she only had fond memories of. Memories of gatherings and dinners and friendship, memories that showed that it was meant to be

a place of love and happiness tainted forever as she watched as his bloody body was carried out of his bedroom. Out from where he had been murdered by the woman that he loved and trusted most in the world.

Watching in horror as the orphan who had grown up to be a passionate and beloved woman, one who had found a purpose and home with Overwatch, mutilate herself and be brought to tears over something that *Ana* had done. Being faced with how much she had let her own fear and pride rule her actions and affect the people she cared about.

Lying in a bed in the only clinic in a small town in Poland, answering to a false name because she couldn't remember her own for all of the shrapnel in her *brain*. Feeling lost and alone and more terrified than she could ever remember being in her life.

There had been far, far too many bad moments in Ana's life.

But of course, if there was anything she had learnt over the last fifty years, it was that there were always more moments waiting ahead.

And hearing her daughter report what she obviously thought was Angela's death while she stood helplessly not even a *mile* away was shaping up to be another one of those moments. Fareeha had not faltered in her strength and confidence in the weeks since Ana had returned, not even Ana's return had fazed her. She had welcomed Ana back with all of the poise and grace that she seemed to do everything with, but all of that was gone as she spoke over the coms, her voice trembling and distraught.

For just a brief moment, Ana believed and feared deep in her heart that the world had lost Angela forever. *She* had lost Angela forever. She would never have the chance to make amends. She would never apologize. Her last memories of Angela would be distrust and dismissal.

In that moment she felt the terrible weight of grief push down on her, grief and lost opportunity; a terrible feeling second only to the crushing sympathy for her daughter as she held someone who was at the very least one of her closest friends in her arms as she died in her arms.

It was just a brief moment, but it was another one of those that she would remember for the rest of her life.

And even after, she still felt the weight of that grief and guilt in her rifle as it rested heavily on her shoulder.

The one sided conversation that she heard shortly afterwards as Fareeha realized that Angela was alive and well brought overwhelming relief that Ana felt deep in the muscles in her back and the shaky sighs of her companions.

Ana didn't even question their decision to walk back, knowing that Fareeha likely needed the time to calm down. Time that Reinhardt apparently needed as well, judging from the deep breaths and how his hands were anxiously flexing around the shaft of his hammer. Even Jesse was pacing next to the truck, unhappily chewing on his unlit cigar as he glared at the driver as she got out of the truck and ran into the building.

Ana suppressed a sigh as she followed the driver, they all relaxed and unwound in their own particular ways, hers was by working. Always working.

And besides, she would be of more use helping unload their payload than standing around fretting.

Unfortunately there wasn't much for her to do other than watch their driver plug their cargo into some archaic computer system in the basement. An anticlimactic ending to a terrible mission.

At least she got to watch it blow up.

That and seeing their driver off occupied her just long enough to watch as Fareeha rounded the corner towards them. All of the tension that Ana hadn't even realized she was carrying relaxed as she stood still in the middle of the road, transfixed at the sight of them.

Ana was glad the fighting was over and there was nothing else that needed her attention, because she wasn't sure she could have looked away if she had wanted to.

Angela was curled up in Fareeha's arms, held in a bridal carry with her back facing Ana and the others as she buried her face into the crook of Fareeha's neck. Her hand rested against Fareeha's cheek underneath her visor.

She wasn't sure if it was just the release of tension and the surge of relief, but the sight made Ana's breath catch. How many couples had she seen in almost the same position over the years? How many weddings had ended with the couple walking, laughing, like that?

It was almost a romantic picture.

Almost.

Were it not for the armor they were wearing.

Were it not for the ugly and jagged holes in that armor, the battle wounds on Fareeha's shoulder and Angela's back.

Were it not for the red streaks all over the both of them. The blood that covered them both in the spatters over Fareeha's helmet and the stains covering the majority of Angela's back and neck.

The sight would have brought a smile to Ana's face. Were it not for those cold, cold, reminders of where they really were.

But now the sight just left her with an ugly and familiar feeling of regret and relief.

If only these were better times.

"Fareeha! Angela!" Reinhardt called from beside her as he walked towards the two, his armor clanging heavily against the ground in his haste, "Are you both well?"

The sound snapped Ana out of her reverie, and drew Fareeha's gaze from where she had been looking at Angela. The gentle smile on her face turning into a wry grin at the sight of Reinhardt rushing to meet them.

"We're fine Reinhardt, Angela took care of our wounds," Fareeha paused for a moment to glance at Angela before continuing, "Most of them anyway, Angela still has a concussion, but we should be able to take care of that when we get a health pack from the ship."

Ana had been about to greet them herself when Fareeha's words drew her up short. Angela couldn't heal a concussion?

A familiar wariness settled over Ana's mind as she looked at the two, her mind trying to work out

how Angela could still be injured. The only reason she couldn't heal herself was the gunshots did enough damage to compromise the Valkyrie suit, because the staff was just an expensive baton without the suit. But... then how did Angela heal from and survive the gunshots?

Ana felt something like dread rise in the back of her mind as she recalled all of the old suspicions that she had long disregarded. The only reason Ana could think of was if the suit wasn't what had healed Angela, it was something else. And Ana couldn't fight the suspicion that she knew what that something was. Ana forced herself to ignore her thoughts for now as she forced herself to calm down, there would be time to indulge her conspiracy theories later. But now wasn't the time for that.

Now was the time to just be glad that Angela was alive, and soon to be well.

Reinhardt and Jesse certainly were, Jesse finally had his signature smirk on his face as Fareeha approached, Reinhardt in tow as he spoke cheerfully to Fareeha.

"It is good to see you both safe my friends, you gave us quite the scare earlier." Reinhardt said, the cheerful tone at odds with the imposing nature of his helmet.

"Yes, I imagine we did," Fareeha said dryly, sparing a quick glance down at Angela, "Sorry about that Reinhardt. I'll buy you a drink next time we're out to make up for it."

Reinhardt laughed at that, saying "Well, I'm not one to say no to free drinks. So I suppose I'll just have to forgive you."

"I'll buy you *a* drink Reinhardt. One." Fareeha said firmly, knowing exactly how much liquor Reinhardt could put away when he wanted to.

Jesse laughed from his place next to Ana, drawing Fareeha's sharp gaze.

"Quit your smirking McCree, you're not included in the offer."

"I don't know Fareeha, I was pretty scared as well," Jesse said.

"But I don't like you as much," Fareeha replied, giving Jesse a flat stare as Angela snorted in laughter.

"Ouch." Jesse said, looking affronted, "That cuts deep kid."

"The fact that you are still calling me 'kid' after we've known each other for over two decades might have something to do with why I don't like you much."

"Well that's jus--"

"*Shit!*" Tracer called over the com, shocking them all, "She's getting away!"

Everyone tensed at Lena's shout, wondering what could make her react like that. Ana didn't have to wait long as she felt it before she heard it; the deep thrum of jet engines resonated through her bones before a building on the horizon trembled, tilted, then fell and let out a terrible crashing sound. From the dust a giant plane rose vertically, its huge mass hanging in the sky before shooting away from them clipping another building in their hurried takeoff.

Talon was withdrawing, what was left of them.

And judging by the tone in Lena's voice, Ana was willing to bet that Widowmaker was on that plane.

“She got away,” Lena said, sounding frustrated and angry.

Frustrated and angry, Ana thought as she watched the plane fly away, carrying with it the woman who had taken her eye, *That sounds about right*.

Ana’s own dark thoughts were echoed in the faces and stances of everyone around her as they watched the plane in silence. Jesse’s expression was as grim as Ana had ever seen and his hand was resting on the handle of his gun, fingers tapping its side anxiously. Reinhardt made an angry sound before he turned away from the plane decisively. Even Angela had looked up from her place in Fareeha’s arms, the first time she had actually moved since they arrived, and her pale face did nothing to distract from the harsh glint in her eyes.

Widowmaker. There was no one else in the world who could provoke such discontent from the Overwatch agents. Even a simple mention of the woman could turn the moods of even the most cheerful of agents dark. Widowmaker was a blight on the history of Overwatch, and not even Gabriel provoked such pain and dislike. At least he *made his choice*.

Of everyone there, only Fareeha’s expression remained calm as she watched the plane fade into the distance. To her, Widowmaker was just another enemy. She had never met the woman who came before, hadn’t been *betrayed*.

Ana envied her daughter for that.

“That’s fine Lena, we are all safe and we stopped Talon from getting what they wanted,” Fareeha reassured calmly with her gaze still on the vanishing plane. Her voice was even and composed as she continued, “This is a win for us, come back and regroup with the rest of us.”

There was a noticeable pause on the other end as Lena tried to compose herself. But when she responded, she sounded just as happy as she ever did. “Sure thing, be there in a jiffy.”

“Take your time Lena,” Fareeha said as she gently adjusted Angela’s position in her arms before she turned to Jesse and asked, “Do we have anything else to do here?”

“Nah, brought the fancy box here. Plugged it in. It exploded. We’re done.” Jesse said, trying to shake the bad mood that had settled over them.

Ana hated that weapons designers made it so hard to disarm weapons. All this fuss to find the one surviving computer capable of interfacing with the weapon, and disarm it safely made her long for the days that she could have solved the issue herself with a big enough hammer.

...Not that she was actually old enough to remember those days, but she could long for them anyway.

“That’s good, then we can leave once Lena gets back,” Fareeha said, grunting a little as she adjusted Angela in her arms again, rolling the shoulder that had been shot before looking at Angela with an fond expression, “And in the meantime, I’m putting you down.”

Angela laughed softly in amusement quietly enough that Ana could barely hear her from less than ten feet away as she replied, “Alright.”

As Fareeha gently lowered Angela to the ground, Ana couldn’t help but draw a sharp intake of breath as she caught her first look at the exit wound.

From the back it looked like any other bullet wound, if a particularly bad one. But exit holes were always worse so she hadn’t realized how serious it was.

Angela's front was completely covered in blood, from her neck down to soak into the top of the cloth at her waist, turning it from its normal golden orange to a deep and rusty red. The white of her armor was stained, what little of it remained. There was nothing left of her armor between her collarbones and her sternum, only the mangled and bloodstained edges of the hole remained. It looked like a bomb had been detonated in Angela's chest.

Any shot from a sniper was incredibly dangerous, and would leave a large hole in whatever it hit, but it wasn't *any* shot that made a wound like that; Angela's armor was some of the strongest armor possible for something that thin. Small arms fire bounced off of it like it was made of steel. That *bitch* had shot Angela with the equivalent of an anti-materiel rifle.

The implications of the sight made Ana ill, she could imagine all too easily what it must have looked like before Angela healed it.

Except... She knew exactly what it would look like. She had seen it before, and even been the cause of injuries like it. A shot like that should have left Angela's spine, heart, and lungs a bloody paste spattered over the pavement for meters. Nearly instantaneous death, they could survive only just long enough to register the sight of their remains.

That wasn't a wound you healed from, no matter how sophisticated the technology they had.

That was a wound that Angela would have to resurrect someone from.

That inkling of dread in the back of Ana's mind returned a hundredfold, and she couldn't dismiss it so easily this time. This was further evidence of Ana's worst fears.

If Angela's equipment was compromised to the point that she couldn't even heal a concussion, then there was no way in hell that it could resurrect her.

So that meant that, she didn't *use* anything to resurrect herself. She did it automatically.

There was only one thing that Ana knew of that could do that. But... Angela hadn't finished it. Jack had confirmed that he scrapped it before it reached the human trial stage, that had been one of the first things she had asked him when they met again. Angela hadn't finished it while working for Overwatch.

Angela couldn't have finished it, Ana thought uneasily, Because if she had...

She was cut off from her trailing and horrified thoughts as Jesse cleared his throat uncomfortably. He pulled at the fabric on his neckline, taking off his poncho and throwing it over Angela's exposed chest to give her some modesty. Angela's face scrunched in confusion as she looked down, wincing as she did so. It took a moment for her to realize that she had been completely exposed, she smiled as she glanced over at Jesse.

"Thank you Jesse," Angela said softly, sounding more amused than thankful.

"Sure thing doc," Jesse said, trying and failing to not sound uncomfortable. Angela laughed softly at his discomfort but didn't say anything else as she rested her head back down and moved her arm to cover her closed eyes.

The simple interaction felt completely at odds with Ana's inner turmoil. Almost surreal in its lack of consequence when she couldn't help but fear the worst. She couldn't help herself from thinking the worst of Angela.

And maybe she shouldn't. After all, there was a reason she disregarded her suspicions before. Angela had never been anything less than honest; overambitious and somewhat impetuous maybe.

But never dishonest. Which was frankly more than could be said for Ana herself.

That Angela had completed her research after Jack axed it, applied it to herself, and then lived with it for almost a decade without her telling anybody, or even anyone noticing was... nearly inconceivable.

Angela was also a very cautious person. It was entirely reasonable for Angela to build an emergency fail-safe in her suit that wasn't connected to the other controls. It took a lot to take out her suit, it was self repairing even if most of the core components were destroyed. It took, well, it took a shot from an anti-materiel rifle to a specific spot to shut her suit down permanently. But it could be shut down, and Ana knew that Angela would never let herself die if she could help it. She had too much to live for, too much work left to do to let herself die.

Ana forced herself to relax and resolved herself to track down Angela when they got back to Gibraltar and just *ask* her. Ana believed that Angela wouldn't lie to her if she just asked, so either way she would have her answer soon enough.

Jesse was saved from the awkward silence that followed by the muted warping sound of Lena's arrival and everyone turned to look as she appeared in a burst of blue.

She looked *exhausted*. Her hair was even more disheveled than normal and her shoulders were slumped. She was completely covered in dirt and dust and some blood but she still grinned widely as she greeted them.

"Hey guys, how's it going?" Lena asked as energetically as she could as she jogged over to where they were loitering by the sidewalk.

"Pretty good," Jesse said, "Got to watch the weapon blow up."

"Neat," Lena said distractedly, not looking away from where Angela was lying, "What about you doc?"

"Fine, just a concussion." Angela said kindly as she waved at Lena with the arm that wasn't covering her eyes.

Lena cocked her head in confusion, her eyes scrunching behind her goggles as she looked at Angela and then at Ana, "A concussion? Can't Ana just fix that up?"

There was a pregnant pause as everyone realized that that was an option, and they all realized that Tracer hadn't been there for Angela and Ana's argument so she had no idea of the enmity between them that guaranteed that Angela was never going to let Ana shoot her with the biotic rifle.

"That... is unfortunately not an option," Angela said, her voice as quiet as before but with a distinct chill in her tone.

Lena looked surprised at the tone in Angela's voice, her eyes flicking between Angela and Ana in thought, the motion almost too quick to notice. After a moment she simply nodded and said, "Okay."

Lena was many things, unobservant was not one of them. She knew perfectly well that Ana could heal Angela, but that she was refusing for some reason. She must have decided to leave well enough alone.

"Well," Lena said, as she rocked her heels in thought before giving Angela an apologetic glance, "If Ana really can't patch you up, you'll have to wait 'til we get back to Gibraltar. I picked the

fastest plane, not one with medical supplies.”

Sighing, Angela said, “That’s alright Lena, just don’t do any tricks and I’ll be fine.”

“There were some supplies in the plane we took that you can use,” Ana cut in, the first words she had said since Fareeha and Angela arrived, “And a bed for you to rest in on the way back, if you’d like.”

Angela raised her arm from her face and gave her a considering look, and Ana felt that familiar regret. It seemed like anything she did, even the most genuine of things, was met with suspicion from Angela these days.

Which wasn’t entirely undeserved, Ana thought as she felt the weight of her rifle on her shoulder. For the better part of a decade it had been familiar, comforting even. A symbol of the *good* she could do. Now it was just another reminder of everything that she had betrayed, that she had left behind.

Ana didn’t know what Angela saw when she looked at her, or what she felt. But the wrinkle in her brow softened, and her voice was kind when she spoke, “A health pack would be appreciated, but the bed will be unnecessary.”

Ana nodded, she hadn’t really expected anything else. Angela hadn’t exactly gone out of her way to avoid spending time around Ana, but she obviously didn’t want to. Spending the next hour or so locked in a plane together probably didn’t sound appealing to her. Ana did wish that weren’t the case though, she had many fond memories of travelling with Angela. When they had been on good terms Angela’s dry wit had made her a joy to work with, good company with none of the stress and complications of her *other* teammates.

But joy was no longer the word Ana would use to describe the feeling that pooled in the hollow of her chest at the thought of Angela. Regret was a much closer word.

Regret for what their relationship had deteriorated to, regret that Ana no longer saw a way for them to return to how they used to be.

Fareeha looked at Angela, her expression masked by her visor as she said, “I *know* that you were working in your lab for the last ten hours before we flew over. You could use the rest.”

“I rested plenty on the flight over,” Angela said dismissively, “Besides, Lena’s plane is faster and the sooner we get back, the sooner we get to relax.”

“Thirty minutes of not working is not the same things as resting.” Fareeha disagreed flatly.

“We both know I won’t be sleeping, whether I’m sitting or lying down doesn’t matter,” Angela argued.

Ana could see Fareeha roll her eyes at that, even through her visor. Sighing heavily, Fareeha slowly reached up and removed her helmet, her exasperation and concern clear on her sweat streaked face as she looked down at Angela. After a quiet moment she sank heavily to a knee beside Angela, the motion making her own exhaustion clear. And when she spoke her voice was soft. Soft and haunted.

“I would appreciate it if you rested in bed on the way back,” Fareeha’s gauntlet looked massive as she gently reached for Angela’s hand, her touch so gentle that Angela’s hand didn’t move until a moment later when she moved it herself to gently grasp at the gauntlet, “I would worry less.”

Angela didn’t look at her. She didn’t move her arm from over her eyes. She just tightened her grip

on Fareeha's hand and sighed. "You worry too much Fareeha."

Fareeha smiled in response, speaking so softly that Ana could barely hear her. "Only about you."

Angela was silent for a moment, but when she did speak her voice was thick with some emotion, "Alright."

It felt almost voyeuristic of Ana to be there, to hear and see the tender moment between the two.

Although she might be the only one to feel self-conscious as Ana thought as she saw Lena snickered into her hand and she nudged Jesse behind Fareeha's back, drawing his attention before making an exaggerated whipping motion with her hand, drawing a snort of laughter from him.

Ana rolled her eyes at the interaction, trying not to smile. While crude, Ana couldn't help but privately agree with the sentiment, the fact that Angela acquiesced to Fareeha's request was remarkable to anyone who knew her. Angela was the most stubborn woman Ana had ever met, including herself. The number of people who could reliably convince her to do something she didn't want to do could be counted on one hand.

Ana tried to find humor in the situation, rather than dwelling on the fact that she used to be among that number.

Now she was just the one who Angela had to be *convinced* to spend time around.

Ignoring the byplay, Fareeha turned towards Ana with a smile and said, "Then Angela and I will ride with you on the way back," she paused to glare over her shoulder at Lena and Jesse, "And since you two are getting along so well you can ride together."

"Sounds good," Lena said with unrepentant laughter in her voice.

"And I'll go along with them to make sure they don't blow the plane up," Reinhardt said gravely, failing to hide the humor in his voice.

"Thank you Reinhardt," Fareeha said, ignoring Lena as she made an indignant sound.

"Speaking of my plane," Lena said, giving up on her brief attempt to appear offended as she pulled her communicator out of her jacket and gestured with it, "Want me to bring her down now?"

"Might as well," Jesse said, looking over Lena's shoulder idly, "Not like we have anything else to do here."

"Set yours down a ways off Lena," Ana said, "I'd like mine close by for Angela."

Angela sighed, her exasperation clear in her voice as she said, "I'm *fine*."

The slight slurring in her voice might have been why Lena ignored her as she agreed with Ana, "Gotcha."

Ana watched her fiddle with her communicator for a moment before pulling out her own and calling for her own plane. She didn't really need to do much, with such advanced auto-pilot and Athena connected to all of their equipment she only needed to tell it what to do, which gave her time to sit back and watch her companions.

She had been doing that a lot, just taking a step back to just watch the other members of this new Overwatch. Seeing how they behaved, how they and their relationships had changed over the

years that she had been gone. A fascinated sort of nostalgic masochism that she couldn't help but indulge in.

Reinhardt appeared to be doing the same thing she was, standing back with his arms crossed and his hammer resting on the ground by his side. She couldn't read him very well with his helmet on, the only thing she could tell was that he was facing Lena and Jesse.

The two had walked a ways away, chatting about something that made Jesse let out a warm bark of laughter. It was a strange but welcome sight to Ana, she didn't think that the two had even met before she left. Jesse had been a member of Blackwatch, and Lena had been kept *far, far away* from that side of the organization. She had been too young, cheerful, and traumatized to let her near the darker side of Overwatch. But, they both looked much happier now in each other's company now than they ever did ten years ago. Jesse looked so much happier and lighter without the grim pressures of Blackwatch and Lena seemed so much less haunted by her experience out of time now that it was far behind her. They looked like nothing so much as a pair of mischievous siblings.

And then there was Fareeha and Angela, and it felt like they truly were Fareeha *and* Angela. It felt like the two came as a pair most times; Ana saw them together more than she saw them apart, Angela in particular. She seemed to not leave her lab unless someone went and dragged her from it, and Fareeha was by far the one to bring her out into the light. They had become an inseparable pair at some point, and they especially looked it now with Fareeha kneeling beside Angela and holding her hand as they conversed in hushed tones.

All of Lena's joking aside, the only reason Ana didn't think they were a couple was because Fareeha had explicitly said they weren't. Not that Ana thought that either Fareeha or Angela would willingly talk about her love life with Ana, but she had no reason to lie to the others.

"Lena?" Angela called, her voice still muzzy as she broke the comfortable quiet that had settled over the group. Lena's head snapped towards her and she moved over to her so fast that Ana was surprised that she didn't leave a trail of blue behind her.

"Yeah doc?"

Moving her arm off of her eyes, Angela leaned her head to look at Lena and quietly said, "I hate to bother you Lena, but I left my staff back where we fell and I don't feel comfortable leaving it here."

"So you want me to go get it?" Lena asked.

"If you would," Angela said with a soft smile.

"Don't worry Doc, I'm on it!" Lena said as she nodded decisively, stretching quickly as she turned on her heel.

"Lena-" Angela called only to be cut off as Lena vanished in a burst of blue light. Ana could see the soft smile of amusement even as she sighed and turned to Fareeha, "Could I borrow your helmet please?"

"Okay?" Fareeha said as she handed it over, looking bemused as she watched Angela put it on over the shattered remnants of her halo and activate the com unit built into it before she laid her head back down, "Why?"

"So that I can tell Lena where we fell, considering that she left before I could tell her," Angela said, before she spoke again, "Yes Lena, I know you can hear me."

Fareeha rolled her eyes good-naturedly as she turned away from where Angela was quietly directing Lena to face Reinhardt.

“Could you keep an eye on Lena on the flight back?” Fareeha asked, her voice serious as she directed the question at both Jesse and Reinhardt, “She’s probably taking this much more seriously than she is letting show.”

Ana didn’t know the specifics about the grudge between Lena and Widowmaker, but she had been around long enough to know that any fight where they met was a bad one for the girl. A fight where Widowmaker managed to dodge her and take a shot at a teammate would be even worse.

Ana briefly thought that it was a good thing that Lena hadn’t seen the hole in Angela’s armor. She probably felt guilty enough without being faced with something like that.

“Of course,” Jesse said, “We’ll keep her company on the flight.”

“And you can help us with that tonight when you buy everyone a round of drinks,” Reinhardt said, surprisingly slyly as he broke the brief tense mood.

“...I’m not getting out of that, am I?”

“You’re the one that offered kid,” Jesse said with a smirk.

“I did not. But at the rate this is going I’ll be buying everyone *but* you a drink.”

Jesse laughed at that, nodding as he said, “That seems fair.”

Their banter was cut short by the deep thrum of engines as Ana’s plane approached, hovering in the sky above them for a moment before it slowly started descending. The jets kicked up dust as it neared the ground, prompting everyone to cover their faces.

“Well,” Fareeha said as the plane settled and deployed its ramp, “At least we can fix your head now Angela.”

She smirked as she knelt beside Angela as she reached her arms out to pick Angela up again, “Up we go.”

Angela just gave her a flat look, even as she tolerantly sat up and put her arms around Fareeha’s shoulders. She didn’t sound particularly happy as she said, “I *can* walk you know.”

“You said that last time, and look how that turned out,” Fareeha pointed out.

“That was six blocks, not six *meters*.” Angela argued, looking at Fareeha through the visor of Fareeha’s own helmet.

Fareeha looked unruffled by Angela’s indignation, and Ana couldn’t blame her. Angela looked distinctly undignified in Fareeha’s arms in her damaged Valkyrie suit, Jesse’s poncho, and Fareeha’s helmet. Angela had always been a well composed and fashionable woman, so the contrast between her normal attire and the mish-mash she was wearing was even more glaring.

Fareeha hummed in acknowledgement but otherwise completely ignored Angela as she stepped onto the ramp and into the plane. She just smiled as she lowered Angela onto the first seat she could reach.

Angela gave her a disgruntled look as she settled into the chair, wincing as she jostled her head.

“...Thank you Fareeha.” Angela said grudgingly, but she sounded genuine.

It surprised Ana, just how willing Angela was to tolerate Fareeha’s fussing. Angela had fought for years to be seen as capable and independent in Overwatch, she would never have allowed that kind of behavior from anyone else.

“You’re welcome Angela,” Fareeha said, before turning to where Ana was standing in front of the ramp, “Now, the medpack?”

“I’ll get it,” Ana said as she walked past the pair and into her plane.

It wasn’t a large plane, definitely not as large as the ones they used to use to deploy whole teams. A few seats that could be pulled out into beds and some cabinets were all that fit in the cabin, and a door to the small cockpit that could fit two people. Comfortable with five to six people, but would be crowded with any more than that.

Ana opened the cabinet, purposely not letting Angela and Fareeha see inside as she removed the cylindrical medpack from her ammo rack. There was no sense in giving Angela a reason to refuse the treatment.

Ana turned around and handed it to Fareeha, who held the blue vial gingerly as she walked over to give it to Angela. Ana was half amused about the fact that Fareeha couldn't wait for Ana to just give it Angela and half hurt that she thought that it was probably for the best that she wasn't the one handing it to Angela.

“Thank you,” Angela said as she instantly snapped the medpack in her hand.

The relief was visible on Angela’s face as she crushed the medpack, the glass and its contents dissolving and leaving nothing left behind but the characteristic golden mist as it floated around her hand before flowing to her head. The mist swirled about Angela's head for a moment before it drew closer and seemed to sink into Angela's scalp.

“That’s much better,” Angela said with a content sigh.

Ana had to fight the urge to wince at the sight of Angela crushing the vial in her hand, memories of a decidedly less friendly conversation suddenly flooding into her mind. Memories of the last time she had spoken to Angela before being shot, and all of the guilt and regret those memories brought with them.

“Now will you stop fussing over me like I’m a child,” Angela asked archly as she looked at Fareeha with a raised eyebrow. Her voice was suddenly so much sharper and coherent, but it did nothing to hide the smile on her face and the fond exasperation in her expression.

“I’d never act like you were a child,” Fareeha said with a charming smile, “But I’m sure I can find another reason to fuss over you soon enough.”

“You worry about me too much,” Angela echoed her earlier statement as she took Fareeha’s helmet off and handed it back.

“Someone has to,” Fareeha said as she held her helmet in her hands, her voice losing some of its playfulness.

Once again, Ana felt uncomfortably as if she were a voyeur in this conversation. She tried to put as much distance between them without being conspicuous, but that just left her leaning on the door to the cockpit. Still within hearing range, which was unfortunate.

"I'm fine Fareeha," Angela reassured softly, a gentle smile on her face as she gripped the gauntlets on Fareeha's suit, visibly squeezing them as she continued, "And I will always be fine Fareeha. It will take much more than bullets to put me down."

The surety in Angela's voice seemed to settle some of Fareeha's worry, even as it incited Ana's own.

Angela had never been the type of person to exaggerate or lie to make someone else feel better, she had thought that pleasant lies were always more cruel than painful truths. So if she said that bullets couldn't kill her, *then bullets couldn't kill her*. She was sure of it.

And Ana was quickly running out of excuses for Angela, there was less and less doubt in Ana's mind that Angela really had done it.

She had completed the Einherjar project, and *lied* about it to Jack.

And that meant that she could have lied about more than just applying it to herself.

The knot of dread and worry in her chest tightened at the thought, completely at odds with the image of the two in front of her. Her thoughts running wild again before she was cut off from her worrying.

"Aww, you two are adorable," Lena called out, interrupting Ana's thoughts as she sauntered into the plane with the Caduceus staff resting on her shoulder. "I'm gone for five minutes and you're already holding each other's hands and making sappy faces."

"Lena," Angela stood up to greet her, keeping her hands cupped around Fareeha's much larger ones even as they both turned to look at Lena.

"Got a package for you Doc," Lena said with a grin, holding the staff out for Angela, "Careful, it's heavier than it looks."

Letting go of Fareeha's hands, Angela turned and took the staff from Lena, a smile graced her face as she was reunited with her signature tool. She gave it a graceful twirl, the staff barely fit in the plane but she managed to maneuver it around as easily as if it were a part of her.

"Thank you Lena," Angela said as she stepped forward to give her a one-armed hug. Angela brought her close and murmured something in Lena's ear, Lena's face dropping into a serious expression as she listened.

Both Fareeha and Ana watched curiously as the two conversed, too quietly for them to hear. Eventually Lena nodded solemnly at something and pulled Angela into a tighter hug for a moment before letting her go.

"Okay Angela," Lena said as she kept her hands on Angela's shoulders. She visibly gathered herself, a smile on her face as she nodded at Angela before turning towards Fareeha and Ana, "I'll get outta your hair and let you take off."

"Lena," Fareeha called as she walked toward Lena, interrupting her as she started to walk off. Lena spun on her heel, adopting a cheerful grin as she tilted her head questioningly at Fareeha as she approached.

"Yeah Fareeha?"

Fareeha gave her a searching look for a moment before solemnly saying, "Thank you for today Lena, I don't know what Angela and I would have done if you weren't here today."

Lena shifted uncomfortably, her smile flickering briefly before she spoke dismissively, “It wasn’t-”

“I’m serious Lena,” Fareeha cut her off, “We would have been pinned down and helpless if you hadn’t taken care of Widowmaker.”

Lena looked like she really didn’t want to accept the praise, and Ana could sympathize. Receiving praise for something that felt like a failure was never pleasant.

“Don’t mention it,” Lena said awkwardly, “I’m going to let you take off now, make sure Angela gets some rest. Okay?”

“Of course,” Fareeha said as she watched Lena walk down the ramp.

“I’m *fine!*”

Ignoring Angela, Lena paused on the walkway to the plane before turning and looking at Fareeha with a sly expression on her face. “And be careful, I don’t think Ana will be as tolerant of hanky panky on her plane as I am on mine.”

“Get out.”

“Aye aye Captain,” Lena laughed as she stepped out of the plane, letting Ana close the ramp behind her.

Ana entered the cockpit, leaving the door open and Fareeha and Angela behind as she mused on Lena’s teasing. Implying that Angela and Fareeha were romantically involved was a running joke that Ana was growing less and less sure was a joke at all.

And Ana wasn’t sure how she felt about that, she wasn’t even sure she had the right to feel *anything* about her daughter’s love life anymore considering how strained their relationship had become. But nonetheless, the idea brought up a complicated mess of emotions in Ana.

If this had been a decade ago when Overwatch was still at its prime, Ana would have been *ecstatic* at the idea. Even a year ago when neither of them were in her life she would have been happy to hear about it.

Every parent wants the best for their child. The best job, the best life, the best life *partner*. And even with all of the personal history between them, Ana couldn’t think of a *better* person than Angela. Angela was a very hard person to compete with in that regard, she was just an... overwhelming person. Overwhelmingly kind, intelligent, passionate, and most of all, overwhelmingly *moral*. She was a *great* woman in the most profound meaning of the word. And when they had worked together, there had been almost no one that Ana admired more.

So Angela was exactly the kind of person that Ana would want for Fareeha, even without taking into account that Angela was someone who Ana cared deeply about anyway. She would have been just as happy for Angela as she would for Fareeha. She would have loved nothing more than to welcome Angela into their family.

Ten years ago.

She would have welcomed the woman who Angela had been ten years ago.

But she had *changed*.

She was no longer the cynical teenager that Ana recruited, and she wasn’t the steadfast woman

Ana had worked with for years. She wasn't the woman who Ana called a friend over a decade ago. She wasn't even the woman who Ana had fought with for years. Angela had somehow changed into a shadow of her former self over the years Ana had been gone.

Angela had always had a fiery passion that drove her every action. Determination and conviction fuelled by the fury that belied her every decision. And all of that was *gone* now. Gone and replaced with a calm and mellow personality that only showed a hint of that old conviction when she was truly pressed into a corner. That core of anger that had defined Angela for so long had simply disappeared.

She had changed so much from the woman she used to be, but sometimes it seemed like everything had. All of the people that Ana loved and cared for had become entirely different people over the years.

Jack, who had always been a stern man, had become so much worse. Angry and hard, all of the good and friendly parts of him consumed by his anger and loss.

Reinhardt, who was just as easy with a smile and laugh as ever, but now those smiles had a tinge of desperate loneliness and relief that hadn't been there before. The years he had spent alone defined him more than all that he had lost.

Genji, a man who was no longer consumed by the pain and rage that had defined him for years, but he was now distant and impersonal in a way that he had never been before.

Lena, so much happier and more confident than she had ever been, but still wracked with the same insecurities and vulnerabilities.

And *Fareeha*. Fareeha who had grown up while Ana hadn't been looking into a powerful and confident woman, at ease with herself and the world in a way that amazed Ana.

The people Ana loved most, and she was no longer sure that they were the same people that she once knew.

So much had happened over the last eight years.

She didn't know what they had done over those years.

She didn't know what they had *become*.

But then, maybe Ana hadn't known who Angela really was even before she left. The last time the two had spoken before Ana left Overwatch had truly driven that point home for her. Seeing Angela mutilate her own hand to make a point had shown her that Ana hadn't really known her, hadn't known how strongly Angela felt, hadn't known how far Angela would go for her beliefs. That moment had shown her what fourteen years of friendship and two years of constant arguing couldn't.

She had always admired certain qualities in Angela. Things like how steadfast she was in her beliefs, or how much she would sacrifice in order to do the right thing. How she would never let anyone stop her from doing what she believed to be *right*.

And all of those amazing qualities were shown in their ugliest light in that moment in Angela's lab. Angela had been steadfast, determined, and willing to sacrifice anything to prove her point. But she had also been furious, hurting, and vindictive. She had chosen to make her point that way because she had known that it would hurt them both.

Angela had made the choice to hurt herself because she had decided that her goal of proving her

point was worth more to her than the pain it would cause the both of them. That was something Angela had absolutely no qualms doing, making smaller sacrifices for larger gains. And that undeniable vein of *ruthlessness* was something that Ana hadn't truly comprehended until ten years ago. She had always known that Angela could make hard decisions for the greater good, but it wasn't the same as knowing that Angela would sacrifice her hand for an argument.

Ana had always known that Angela was someone who had done great things, and was destined to do more. What she hadn't fully understood at the start was that the true face of greatness wasn't being smarter or *better* than everyone else, even though Angela was. True greatness was doing the undone. It was going *farther* than anyone else had gone before. Doing the things that no one had done before, that no one had dared to do before. The things that no one could *fathom* doing before.

It meant going farther than others would deem acceptable, or even *conscionable*.

Angela's tech was literally built off of her blood, sweat, and tears. But it took more blood than anything else, she had hurt and bled and suffered to test it, to refine it. Carved out literal pounds of her own flesh to test the regenerative capabilities. Hurt herself constantly for years to see if there were long term side effects. Hundreds of iterations of her tech demanded thousands of tests, thousands of bloody wounds to be healed.

Such self sacrifice bordered on the edge of madness. It was something few could understand, and even fewer could go through with.

That... drive that made Angela do the things she did was something that Ana only understood in the last moments that they had spent together before everything went wrong, but even before then it had colored all of Angela's actions with a passion and determination that was simply missing now.

The Angela that Ana used to know would never have allowed Ana to continue using her rifle, she had explicitly said that she would rather die than let a weaponized version of her tech exist. And Angela wasn't a liar; if she said it, she meant it. At least, Ana had always believed Angela to be an honest person. But then, it seemed like everything else about her had changed over the years, what made Ana think that Angela was still honest?

In the time that Ana had been lost in thought, she had managed to take off and set the plane on its course. And she could tell through the open cockpit door that Fareeha had managed to pull down the bed and convince Angela to lie down in it.

"It seems like our evening plans will have to be changed," Angela said ruefully from her place on the bed, "It'll take me a while to dig all of the shrapnel out of us."

"All the more reason you should rest up now." Fareeha said from her seat next to the bed, she sounded just a little bit too tired to be convincing.

"I think *you* should be the one resting, considering you'll be busy buying everyone drinks when we get back."

"I'm not getting out of that, am I?" Fareeha asked rhetorically, "Will you be joining us Angela?"

"No thank you. I'll work on myself while you're busy and be ready for you when you get done." Angela said, drawing an exasperated sigh from Fareeha.

"You know, self-surgery is not exactly what I was hoping you'd do when we got back," Fareeha said.

"I know that Fareeha," Angela said apologetically, "But I might as well do it now, there's really

no point in procrastinating.”

“*Procrastinating*,” Fareeha repeated in a disbelieving tone, “Just because you don’t need to sleep doesn’t mean you don’t need to rest occasionally.”

Ana snapped her head toward the two, shocked at what she had heard. *Didn’t need to sleep.*

“I don’t need to sleep *because* I don’t need to rest,” Angela corrected with a teasing smile on her face.

"Semantics." Fareeha snapped, trying to sound upset through the good humor in her voice.

For a moment the two stayed there, smiling at each other, before Angela turned and spotted Ana staring at her with a shocked and dismayed expression. She looked confused for a second before she realized what they had been talking about.

“Yes Ana?” Angela prompted. She sounded open and curious, but all of the warmth she had when speaking to Fareeha was gone. Instead, she had the same expression she always did when she was preparing for a fight, a strange combination of defiance and resignation.

Fareeha turned and looked at Ana, confused as Ana drew a deep breath.

“You finished the Einherjar project.” Ana said with a hard edge to her voice.

“In a way,” Angela agreed, her voice solemn and serious, “I had a lot of free time to work on my projects over the last decade.”

Ana didn’t know what to say to that, what words could give voice to the horror and betrayal that she was feeling?

The silence laid heavily over the three before Fareeha apparently had enough and asked, “The Einherjar project?”

Angela didn’t look away from Ana when she responded, “A pet project of mine that I started while working with Overwatch. With a name that fit the original intentions better than what it would eventually become.”

“It was originally intended as a way to resurrect Overwatch Agents without needing my Valkyrie suit,” Angela said. Her voice turned flat as she recalled old arguments and continued, “Unfortunately that version was deemed... impractical.”

Impractical was one way of putting it. It had been prohibitively expensive, and dangerously unprecedented. And it reached into a territory that Ana had been philosophically opposed to. In the end, it had been Angela arguing for with Jack and Ana arguing against. Gérard and Gabriel had been on her side until Gérard died and Gabriel’s involvement in Blackwatch caused a conflict of interests that led to him being removed from the meetings.

“I was unwilling to scrap the idea entirely, so we compromised and I developed an idea to apply the theory on a smaller scale. Constantly repairing the damage caused by fatigue turned out to be much easier than restoring all damage to the entire body. The end goal was someone who would never tire and would never need to rest. But Jack cancelled the project while it was still in animal testing.”

It should have been cancelled sooner. It never should have continued past the first rat trial, but Angela was a very passionate and convincing woman so Ana and Jack’s concerns were alleviated against their better judgement.

“That didn’t stop you though,” Ana said flatly. “You continued the research after Jack vetoed it.”

“I stopped answering to Jack when he died.” Angela said, a noticeable chill in her voice.

“You stopped answering to him long before that if you finished it in time to-” Ana started before she cut herself off seeing the darkening expression on Angela’s face and the confusion on Fareeha’s. This wasn’t the place, this wasn’t the time. She tried to suppress all of the burning hurt and betrayal in her, but Angela interrupted with a calm voice.

“Ana,” Angela said, “You once told me that fear makes us too willing to go too far. Too willing to do things that could hurt others, people we care about. You told me that our own fear was Overwatch’s greatest enemy. Did you think that your death would make us less afraid?”

Angela continued, her speech building up speed and momentum even as her voice stayed quiet and steady.

“Or did you think us *above* something like that? Did you think that we wouldn’t fall into the same trap that you had, make the same mistakes that you had?” Angela said sounding nearly derisive, “Well you were *wrong*. Gérard’s death may have been the beginning of the end, but yours was the first nail in Overwatch’s coffin.”

Ana nearly flinched. Gérard’s death was a touchy subject at the best of times, and hearing her ‘death’ spoken of in the same breath as his brought out an overwhelming feeling of unease in her heart. What had happened with Gérard and Amélie had affected all of the most influential members of Overwatch, and nearly broken the organization as a whole. Ana had avoided thinking about it, and hearing that her death had a comparable effect on her loved ones left her speechless.

“Things *changed* after you died Ana, and we all did things we maybe wouldn’t have before. And some of us even did things that we regret.” Angela said, her voice losing some of its heat as it colored with regret, “Myself and Gabriel might have done more regrettable things than the rest.”

Gabriel. And that was the true issue here. Not the fact that Angela had finished it, or that she had used it on herself. But that there were currently *two* people in the world that were effectively immortal, and one of them was travelling the world hunting down and killing her old friends.

And Ana didn’t know of anyone other than Angela in the *world* that could make someone like Reaper. The only reason she hadn’t believed Angela had done it the instant she had met Reaper was because she *trusted* her. She trusted that Angela wouldn’t do something like that to their friend, and more than that she trusted Angela to tell them the truth. She trusted Angela not to lie to them, her *friends*.

But now, here was Angela, as good as saying that she had gone behind Jack’s back to work on the Einherjar project. Here was Angela, revealing that she had been *lying* to all of them for months about herself, about *Gabriel*.

“We did things that we grew to regret,” Angela repeated heatedly, “But you’d be a liar if you said you hadn’t done the same Ana.”

“You-” Ana started angrily, only to be cut off by Fareeha.

“Okay!” Fareeha declared, interrupting the growing fight, “I will admit that I have no idea what you are fighting about, but it has been a long day and I would like to get back to base without anyone dying. So perhaps we could table this argument for a later date.”

“Angela?” Fareeha asked as she looked archly at Angela. It was blatantly obvious that she wasn’t

asking for them to calm down, so much as telling them to.

"That's fine," Angela said neutrally, not actually looking away from Ana, "I'm not one for fighting anyway."

Ana stayed silent under the combined gaze as Fareeha turned to look at her.

"Umi?"

But she couldn't say anything, still reeling from the revelations.

"Umi?" Fareeha repeated quietly as she stepped closer, she towered over Ana in her armor as she tentatively spoke to Ana, quietly enough that Angela couldn't hear, "I recognize that I am out of my depth here, that you might have some legitimate and justifiable grudge. But I just watched Angela get shot in the head, and then her heart."

Ana looked at Fareeha, alarmed as her daughter's voice cracked and face twisted with grief.

"I held her in my arms and thought she was dead." She said, her voice quiet and solemn, "I... I want to get back to the base and just relax for awhile. Whatever this grudge is, it has lasted the better part of a decade, can it wait just another day?"

Fareeha was right, she had *no idea* what this was about. She had no idea who Angela used to be. No idea the endless tough decisions that Angela had endured that showed her tremendous passion, determination, and morals. She especially had no idea about the uncompromisable convictions that Angela held close to her heart. She didn't know that one of the most important of those convictions was that Angela *never* used a version of her tech that she hadn't already used on herself, important to the point that Ana couldn't imagine Angela *ever* compromising on it.

Fareeha didn't know that Ana had spent the better part of a year defending Angela in her mind, coming up with reasons why Angela *couldn't* be responsible for what happened to Gabriel. Fareeha didn't know that the only reason she could come up with in her defense was that Angela had never used the Einherjar project on herself.

But... no matter how frustrated Ana felt, how much she wanted to argue, to demand that Angela tell the *truth*, how could Ana say no to Fareeha's request? How could Ana continue to argue and ignore the very first thing Fareeha had asked of her in over a decade. So for now, she would stop. Just for now.

"Fine, but this isn't over Angela," Ana said, "We need to talk about this."

Ana turned back to face the cockpit, intending to leave Angela behind her when she heard her speak up behind her.

"Ana." Angela called, stopping Ana in her tracks, "I recognize that coming back and finding everything and everyone changed must be difficult. But you *left*, you left and you have no idea what happened while you were gone. What happened and what we had to do."

Ana stared grimly at her, "No, but I think I'll find out soon enough."

Angela settled back down, ignoring Ana. Ana wished that she could so easily do the same.

Ana wished she could just *look away* from the woman who had made a monster out of their friend.

Chapter End Notes

Finally! I am back! And this is all I have to show for the wait, a pain in the tuchus, 9,000 words of product that took ~20,000 words of effort.

This chapter was boring but necessary, and I'm not too happy with it (I realize that I say that every chapter, I'll stop when it stops being true.). I'll try to make the next one better, fortunately I'm much more excited for the that one. And it shouldn't take months to write considering that I've already written about half of the next two chapters.

Anyways, next chapter is titled Wake, and will have all of the happiness that name implies.

Also, I changed the summary a bit, just one word.

End Notes

I'm on tumblr, faustianfantasy.tumblr.com, come chat or something.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!